We are all smug

- how to understand uncertainty as an expressivist

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One of the most debated areas of metaethics is whether moral beliefs should be understood as descriptive beliefs or as non-cognitive states of mind. If the former is true, then moral beliefs are truth-apt and should be understood to describe facts of the world. Expressivists think that moral beliefs are expressions of non-cognitive states of mind similar to desires and that moral beliefs do not get their meaning from any descriptive facts. Instead, the function of a moral judgement is to avow attitudes, express preferences, or the like. This thesis explores two problems, which arise from the expressivists understanding of moral beliefs. More specifically, the problems investigated are about how uncertainty and certainty in our moral beliefs should be understood by those endorsing expressivism.

Expressivism neatly explains why moral beliefs have a motivational force, but faces problems in explaining why our everyday normative talk seems to behave as if moral beliefs are similar to all the descriptive beliefs we have. Quasi-realism is a project aimed to explain and justify everyday moral talk from the expressivist viewpoint. Moral error is one of the concepts our everyday moralizing uses, which quasi-realism aims to justify. Being wrong in moral matters should be possible, as should uncertainty on whether your own moral beliefs are erroneous. If moral beliefs are expressions of desire-like non-cognitive states of mind, it is not obvious how we can be uncertain of them. After all, desires are traditionally thought to be unquestionable. An explanation of moral uncertainty is, in this case, a crucial goal for quasi-realism. Andy Egan claims that quasi-realists cannot provide a good enough explanation of moral uncertainty. In particular, he argues that there are fundamental moral beliefs which quasi-realists are forced to judge as *a priori* true, while everyone else's fundamental moral beliefs can be doubted. If so, this asymmetry means that quasi-realists are unpardonably smug and so fail to vindicate our everyday understanding of morality.

Michael Smith provides another problem for quasi-realists and expressivists. He claims that moral beliefs have three features, and expressivists can only provide an explanation of two of them. These three features are the importance of a belief versus other beliefs, its stability when new facts and opinions are uncovered, and the certitude that the belief holder has regarding the truthfulness of the belief. From these three features, it is certitude that is widely regarded as the one which expressivists cannot explain, making quasi-realists' goals once again unattainable.

This thesis explores the different ways quasi-realists and expressivists have tried to answer these arguments and failed. I will argue that the two problems presented here are linked, and the solution to Egan's argument can only be gained if Smith's argument is also solved. Smith's understanding of certitude is argued to be erroneous, and that his problem of explaining certitude poses no further problems for expressivists, which everyone else would not face as well. In addition, this thesis will have suggestions of how certitude should be understood regardless of metaethical views. As for Egan's challenge, I will argue that his definition of fundamental moral beliefs is incomplete. I propose that fundamental moral belief should be understood as completely certain beliefs and that expressions of knowledge accompany those, and that no-one can doubt fundamental beliefs. We are all smug when it comes to our most fundamental moral beliefs.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
metaethics, noncognitivism, realism, quasi-realism, expressivism, credence, uncertainty, degrees of belief, certitude

1 INTRODUCTION

"Stealing is wrong" is an ethical statement. There are commonly understood to be three ways to form philosophical questions about this judgement, each creating a layer on top of the other one. The first layer is about the practical questions this statement produces and is called applied ethics. Applied ethics is concerned with questions of when and how do moral judgements apply. Is it wrong to steal from a thief in order to provide a meal for a needy family? If we can prevent stealing, does this create an obligation for us to do just that?

Next layer of ethics is discussing why "stealing is wrong", called normative ethics. Is stealing wrong because stealing does not maximise happiness, or because it violates our duty to respect humanity? If applied ethics is interested in daily problems created with automation and machine learning used in the medical industry, normative ethics aims to discover general rules for declaring acts right or wrong by finding out why some things are wrong or right. Normative and applied ethics do mingle in some cases, as both are interested in actually discovering what to do in certain situations.

This thesis deals with neither of these layers, but the one which discusses questions that come before these problems. Questions of whether anything really is wrong, what is "wrongness", or are moral judgements truth-apt is called metaethics. Metaethics is involved with the epistemology of moral knowledge, the semantics of moral talk and thought, metaphysics of moral properties, the psychology of moral agents, and even anthropology of moral disagreement between communities. Metaethics is considered to be completely separate from applied and normative ethics, as the questions it deals with are abstract. However, if metaethics fails to provide answers to what morality is or undermines the use of moral facts, it could be argued that applied and normative ethics would be in trouble as well. Applied and normative ethics are closest to our everyday moralising, and so almost all metaethicists want to preserve them. Even in the case that metaethicist would deny that there are any moral facts or that all moral claims are

systematically false, there is usually offered a way to preserve our surface-level moralising.

Considering the scope of metaethics, it is no wonder that there are a lot of different positions one can take. One of the significant diving lines in metaethics, and central to this thesis, is the question of whether moral beliefs are truth-apt. Cognitivists claim that moral beliefs, such as "stealing is wrong", are similarly describing the world as a belief of "cat is on the mat". Cognitivists are usually also realists, saying that those descriptive facts exist in a metaphysical sense. Relying on descriptive facts would seem to be the most common-sensical way of understanding moral beliefs. The focus on this thesis is on a set of theories, which deny that moral beliefs should be understood to be equal to beliefs about descriptive matters. These theories are called non-cognitivist, as they state that moral beliefs are non-cognitive states of mind, similar to desires and emotions. An early form of non-cognitivism even stated that moral beliefs are just emotions, saying "stealing is wrong" is effectively saying "stealing boo!".

The branch of non-cognitivism that is the focus of this thesis is more advanced, and more complicated, than just declaring moral beliefs to be emotions. Declaring moral beliefs to be emotions and denying that they are truth-apt means that no normative logic is possible. Expressivism aims to enable logical thought even though it maintains the non-cognitivist explanation of moral beliefs. Expressivism is commonly accompanied by quasi-realism, which is a project within expressivism that wants to explain and justify our everyday moral talk. Quasi-realists will want to earn our right to speak of true moral beliefs from the expressivist viewpoint. Naturally, there are many arguments back and forth whether they can actually do this. It is no small thing first to argue that moral judgements do not get their meaning from moral facts at all, indeed that moral facts do not exist in a metaphysically robust sense at all, and in the next sentence claim that using moral facts when speaking of moral matters is justified.

The issue researched in this thesis is about whether quasi-realists can justify all that they claim to do. If moral beliefs are expressions of non-cognitive states of mind and not "ordinary" beliefs, how should we understand uncertainty in our moral judgements? After all, the prime example of a non-cognitive state of mind is a desire, and it does not make

any sense to doubt whether a desire we have is true or not. The existence of a desire is enough to be sure of it. In contrast, while I am pretty certain that "stealing is wrong" is a correct judgement, I am open to doubt if that is true in all possible situations. So I do have some uncertainty in the proposition "stealing is always wrong", and quasi-realists should be able to make sense of both my certainty in one judgement and uncertainty in the other. Even more, they should be able to make sense of why I am more confident of one judgement compared to some other moral judgement.

Andy Egan proposed an argument that rests on the asymmetry of doubt resulting from the quasi-realist position. Egan argues that quasi-realism is forced to conclude that only way for an expressivist to doubt a moral judgement is to question whether he would keep that belief after an improvement in his epistemic situation, for example after a fresh contemplation of facts at hand or after learning new matters (Egan 2007, 206). As for beliefs we judge that we would not change after any improvement, Egan calls them stable or fundamental beliefs. Based on the last two sentences, it is clear that we cannot doubt these fundamental beliefs. Despite our inability to doubt our own fundamental beliefs, we still can doubt everyone else's fundamental beliefs. This asymmetry is, according to Egan, unpardonably smug and against common moral thought. If correct, this would mean that the quasi-realist project fails.

Michael Smith, on the other hand, focuses on the non-cognitivist roots of quasi-realism. Smith argues that non-cognitivists cannot explain the three features of moral beliefs he identifies. The three features of beliefs are robustness, importance, and certitude of a moral belief. Desire-like non-cognitive states of mind can only account for two of the features with the strength of a desire and changes in that strength over time (Smith 2002, 316). It is the certitude which comes under Smith's fire as the most challenging feature for non-cognitivists to explain. If Smith is right, no non-cognitivist, expressivists and quasi-realists included, can explain what graded levels of uncertainty are, making it impossible for them to compare confidence levels of two different moral beliefs.

In this thesis, I will argue that Egan's and Smith's arguments should be understood to deal with the same issue: how quasi-realists should understand uncertainty in moral beliefs. More generally, I aim to shed light on how uncertainty in moral beliefs should be

understood by all and how quasi-realism has every tool it needs in order to answer the questions proposed here. Both Egan and Smith formulate problems which do not only plague quasi-realists, but turn out to be problems equally for everyone.

First, in chapter 2, I will briefly lay out the metaethical scene in which quasi-realism operates. It will explain what the difference between quasi-realism and its main rivals is, as well as explaining the key terminology used in this thesis. The aim of chapter 2 is to explain why the problems explained in the later chapters look like problems only quasi-realists face, and why the rival theories do not face demands to explain uncertainty.

Chapter 3 first explains Andy Egan's challenge, shows how it has been reformulated so that Egan's real challenge to quasi-realism is discovered, and then lays out several proposals for answering that challenge. After dismissing all the proposals as inadequate, I will argue that understanding how credences function is the key to finding out a viable solution. This argument connects Egan's challenge to Smith's argument, which is then explained in chapter 4. Chapter 4 is devoted to Smith's challenge as well as explaining counterarguments to that challenge and how those fail to meet the challenge.

After explaining the challenges to quasi-realism dealt with in this thesis in chapters 3 and 4, chapter 5 will clarify what is meant by degrees of belief and certitude. The Bayesian model of belief, which is at the heart of Smith's account of certitude, is argued to be faulty. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 will explore out different possibilities of understanding certitude and degrees of belief while arguing that quasi-realists can use all of the credible options that realists can use.

While chapter 5's aim is to answer Smith's challenge and explain how certitude is problematic not just for quasi-realists, chapter 6 will take all the previous learning together to argue what commitments fundamental belief really has. The aim in chapter 6 is to answer Egan's challenge with all the learnings from previous chapters and end with a summary of conclusions in chapter 7. The overarching aim of this thesis is to defend quasi-realism against these two charges and argue that quasi-realism does not have any additional burden of proof compared to its biggest rivals.

2 COMPARISON OF REALISM AND QUASI-REALISM

2.1 What Expressivism Is Not

Before exploring quasi-realism, we first need to understand its roots. The previous chapter gave a brief introduction to the main arguments dealt in this thesis and their background, but to fully understand the discussion in the latter chapters of this thesis will require more depth. One of the central themes in this thesis is the juxtaposition between cognitivist realism and expressivism, and the claim of quasi-realists that they can explain all realist-seeming aspects of our moral thought from the expressivist starting point. To understand why this is a controversial issue and what exactly is the difference between realism and quasi-realism; this chapter will explore similarities and differences between these different metaethical viewpoints. As a result, the commitments of quasi-realism are laid bare.

As with many things in life, to better understand what expressivism and quasi-realism are, it benefits to look into what they are not. The general debate is about how to understand talk and thought about moral facts, and in some cases, whether they even exist. The "default" theory about moral facts is called moral realism. As Geoff Sayre-McCord (2017) describes it, moral realism takes claims about moral matters to aim to report facts, and that those claims are true if the world is as those facts describe it. In other words, the claim that John has to follow his promises aims to report a similar fact as the claim that grass is green, and both claims are judged to be true or false in a similar fashion.

Moreover, moral realists also make the substantive claim that at least some of those moral claims are true, thus rejecting error theory, which argues that all moral claims are false or involve a mistaken presupposition[1] (Sayre-McCord, 2017) To briefly summarise the discussion so far, moral realism takes moral facts to really exist in a similar way to ordinary, descriptive facts. The rest of this section will explore the questions moral realism raises and why there is room for alternative theories.

[1] For a more nuanced and comprehensive explanation of moral error theory, see f.e. Jonas Olson *Moral Error Theory* (2014) or John Mackies *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977), in which Mackie coined the term “Error Theory”.

While all moral realists claim that moral facts are metaphysically real, there is a disagreement of how those facts should be understood. The disagreement is about how moral facts relate to naturalism. Do moral facts conform to naturalistic rules, or should they be understood to be different from natural facts? Naturalism is a metaphysical claim according to which only those facts that we can reconcile with the results of (natural) science can be true (Sayre-McCord, 2017). Natural sciences are, for their part, understood to include psychology in their midst (Miller 2003, 4). For realists, this means that if naturalism is accepted, moral facts should be understood as being shorthand of, or otherwise closely related to, natural properties. There exists little consensus on what should be counted as natural properties, as quite often they are described as those properties which are investigated by natural sciences and psychology (f.e Miller 2003, 4). While easy to explain in principle, natural properties resist a clear definition. Ridge (2018a) lists a number of possible definitions ranging from the above used "investigated by natural sciences and psychology" to "can be known only a posteriori". The precise definition of natural properties is beyond this thesis, if not all current literature, and so a few examples of what natural moral properties could be will suffice. For naturalist moral realists, moral properties would be defined as "promotes happiness", "desirable", "pleasant" and similar terms. The benefit of naturalism is that it would neatly explain the findings of normative ethics, almost as-is. Classic utilitarian or deontological explanations of what "good" is can be taken to describe facts of the world, if naturalistic realism is adopted.

One of the earliest arguments against understanding moral facts as natural properties was presented by G.E. Moore presented in his 1903 volume, *Principia Ethica*. Moore's Open Question Argument, as it is known, argues that defining moral terms with natural properties always begs the question of whether that natural property is what the moral term means (Sayre-McCord, 2017). For example, defining "good" as "promoting happiness" can always be questioned by asking "is promoting happiness really good?", even by a competent speaker who understands the terms. The question of whether any natural property can adequately capture what moral terms means remains open and according to Moore, and many of his contemporaries, this proves that natural properties could not capture the full meaning of moral terms (Sayre-McCord, 2017).

Moore's argumentation is not currently thought to be as convincing as his contemporaries took it, but his argument let people to question naturalistic understanding of moral facts. There are currently other ways to highlight that natural and moral facts are crucially different. As Alexander Miller (2003, 21) puts it, there appears to be a conceptual or internal link between a judgement that relies on moral facts and acting according to it, which judgements that include only natural properties do not have. If this truly is so, naturalists owe an explanation of what that link is. This line of argumentation rests heavily on whether that kind of internal link does exist, and so it is not a complete knock-down argument against naturalism. Still, the link between moral judgements and motivation to act according to those judgements demands an explanation from naturalists.

If Moore's argument and the argument from moral motivation are convincing, a realist can take another path. That is to say that moral facts are non-natural facts. Non-naturalism is what Moore himself subscribed to and claimed that moral facts are instantiations of the non-natural, simple and unanalysable property of moral goodness (Miller 2003, 29). Unsurprisingly, any non-naturalistic version of realism, like Moore's, has also problems. For one, we must first point how moral facts appear to depend on natural facts. In two cases where the natural facts are the same, it seems necessarily true that the moral facts are the same as well. The most uncontroversial example uses possible worlds to illustrate the case. Consider two possible worlds, which are identical in every natural fact. If a thing is morally wrong in one of them, it clearly must be wrong in the other one as well (Ridge, 2018). In a more general way, moral supervenience is understood to be saying that for all moral wrong actions, there exists such features that anything else with those features are necessarily wrong as well (Väyrynen 2012, 174). Dependence of moral facts on natural facts, or the supervenience of moral facts upon natural facts, is a significant problem for all non-naturalistic versions of realism. Why would this supervenience exist, if moral facts are not reducible to natural properties and are distinct from them?

The problem of supervenience is about the metaphysics of moral facts. Another important problem arises from the field of epistemology. David Hume famously stated "no ought from is", claiming that there is no valid inference from solely non-moral premises to a moral conclusion (Sayre-McCord, 2017). Hume's argument complements Moore's line of thought, which states that no moral fact can be discovered by just examining natural facts

with the scientific method. Natural sciences can establish what "is", but not what "ought to be". The logical next question is that where do we get moral premises, those facts and starting points that we can use to discover moral conclusions? Moore himself attributed those to intuition. In Moore's theory, intuition is similar to sense-perception but focus on discovering moral truths.

Nevertheless, as Miller (2003, 35) puts it, it is quite obscure what intuition means in this context. Either it seems to refer to the capacity to make correct moral judgements, or it means a cognitive faculty like sense-perception, but unlike it as well as it perceives affairs outside of causality (Miller 2003, 35). Both options are lacking in explanative power. Claiming intuition is a capacity to make correct moral judgements, and thus moral judgements access moral facts, is a trivial claim which does not explain how intuition is capable of accessing those moral facts. On the other hand, claiming that intuition is like a sense-perception, but can access facts that cannot be detected by senses, does require significantly more explanation than what has thus far been offered (Miller 2003, 36).

While there is an ongoing debate about how valid all these arguments against realism are, at least the arguments opened up a possibility to look for other solutions. In the early 20th century it seemed like equating moral facts with either natural properties or defining them as non-natural seemed to face significant obstacles, making moral realism a dead end. Problems that moral realism faced from Moore and his contemporaries is the backdrop that set the scene for expressivism to emerge and offer an alternative view, one that shifts the focus from what moral facts are to the human activity of making ethical judgements. That alternative view is examined in the next section in more detail.

Before that, the key points about the realist perspective relevant to the discussion in this thesis can be summarised so that at the surface level, realism conforms nicely to our everyday moral talk and intuitions. It treats moral beliefs as similar to non-moral beliefs, and so does not face any extra burden to explain things that work similarly in and non-moral cases. A quick look beneath the surface, however, undercovers significant problems as discussed widely in this section. Moral and non-moral beliefs behave differently in many ways. These differences are embraced by expressivists, as can be seen in the next section.

2.2 Expressivism Explained

As we saw in the last section, realism has historically faced its most potent objections from metaphysical and epistemological standpoints. Those objections sparked interest in antirealism, which denies that moral facts or properties are real (Miller 2003, 5). This section will briefly explain what antirealist expressivism is and what commitments it makes.

Essentially, expressivism is a metaethical theory according to which a normative judgement gets its meaning from the non-cognitive state of mind of the agent expressing the judgement (Toppinen 2014, 13). Recall that moral realism takes claims about moral matters, which are normative judgements, to aim to report facts. This difference has often been illustrated by how the mind of the person making a moral judgement fits the actual world. Moral realism takes moral judgements to aim to represent moral properties and that those judgements are true only if those moral properties are represented as they really are in the world. Trying to represent the world correctly is a so-called mind-to-world fit, where the aim is to change the mind to fit how the world is. For expressivists, the judgement "x is good" is (roughly) a desire-like state of mind that approves the x and aims to change the world to fit this judgement, i.e. the fit is reversed from the cognitivist version like realism and is world-to-mind (Schroeder 2010, 12).

The function or purpose of normative judgement can thus be understood to either represent the world or to express an approval-like state of mind. Mark Schroeder (2010, 73) explains the standard expressivist manoeuvre with an illustrative example. A non-normative sentence like "grass is green", when sincerely stated, expresses a belief that grass is green. Expressivists claim that a normative judgement like "murder is wrong" expresses a *relevant attitude* precisely the same way as the sentence "grass is green" expresses a belief (Schroeder 2010, 73). The difference between realism and expressivism then lies in what type of mental activity or state of mind is expressed. To make the issue clear, it is important to note that expressivism is not a subjectivist theory. "Murder is wrong" does not *report* that we have a non-cognitive attitude of disapproval against murder, it expresses the opposition to murder. Much like "grass is green" does not report

that we have a belief about the colour of grass, but rather expresses the belief that grass is green.

Expressivism explains many of the problems that moral realism faced, but with the downside of seemingly losing connection with the so-called common moral thought. For example, declaring that moral judgements do not represent any facts of the world and that the function of a moral judgment is to *change* the world, not describe it, leaves open a question of whether moral beliefs are truth-apt at all. Having mind-independent moral truths, on the other hand, is considered widely as one of the cornerstones of moralizing. Quasi-realism is an attempt to explain this common moral thought and justify it from the expressivist viewpoint. Whether quasi-realism can do this in all issues is the crux of this thesis, and so quasi-realism will be investigated more thoroughly in the next section.

2.3 Quasi-realism

As has been discussed in previous sections, there is a conflict between everyday moral talk and expressivism. Expressivism is an antirealist theory, which denies any moral reality (Blackburn 2009, 7). Denying moral facts seems to fly in the face of our intuitions, as we very much tend to think moral matters as true or false. While it can be the case that our intuitions are wrong and should be changed, that is not what most expressivists are aiming for.

Quasi-realism aims to resolve this conflict between intuitions and expressivism by justifying and explaining everyday moral talk from the expressivist viewpoint (Blackburn 1993b, 185). As such, it is an influential program within modern-day expressivism. The exists an unfortunate problem with justifying and explaining "everyday moral talk": it is not clear what is meant with that. Blackburn, the original author of quasi-realism, clarifies that quasi-realism aims to justify such things as speaking of moral truth that can be discovered and claiming that there can be wrong moral opinions (Blackburn 1984, 180).

Quasi-realist will happily speak of mind-independent moral truths all the while acknowledging that moral beliefs are "just" expressions similar to approval and disapproval. How can they do this? Deflationism, or minimalism as it is also called, is the

tool to do that. Very roughly, minimalism is the position that truth is not a substantial property and that adding "is true" to a proposition is just a way to assert it (F.e. Van Roojen 2018, Stoljar & Damnjanovic 2014). As expressivism already has a robust explanation of the moral proposition like "killing is wrong", and if adding "is true" to that proposition adds nothing substantial, quasi-realists can continue to speak of moral truth by embracing minimalism. Wittgenstein, who serves as an influence on quasi-realism, says that speaking of truth is just making clear of the speaker's commitments on the issue at hand, and similarly quasi-realist will speak of moral truth without adding any extra burden to themselves (Blackburn 1998, 78).

Expressivists have made their difference to moral realism apparent by substituting "moral belief" with "moral judgement" when talking about moral matters. While both phrases refer to the same activity, judgement is more easily understood to be a non-cognitive mental act. Quasi-realists might not want to do that emphasis. For a quasi-realist, moral judgements are beliefs, but those beliefs function differently from non-moral beliefs. Blackburn has even suggested that quasi-realism should be called "non-descriptive functionalism", to make a point about what where his commitments are (Blackburn 1998, 77). He is drawing the line on whether moral propositions should be understood as representations of how the world is or whether they are best understood in other terms, backing the latter explanation (Blackburn 1998, 77). The difference between realism and quasi-realism is then about how and why we have moral beliefs and how those beliefs are applied, not about whether there are moral facts in the world.

Intuition and uneasiness with consequences are not bullet-proof tenets of any philosophical thought, but it surely helps if we do not need to change *everything* we think about ethics. Expressivism and anti-realism could lead to a conclusion that we need to change how we talk about moral matters, even quite radically. Abandoning the idea that moral beliefs, like "murder is wrong", are not true or false does not sound that inviting a thought for most of us. Quasi-realism preserves the validity of these thoughts, which explains why most modern expressivists tend to subscribe to the quasi-realist project. Supporting plain, first-level talk of morality is a valuable asset for any metaethical theory.

To summarise, quasi-realism denies that any moral "reality" exists and speaks of moral truth in a minimal sense. There are only natural facts, which moral facts are not, but speaking of moral truth, as all our surface-level moralising, is justifiable. Quasi-realism is seemingly full of contradictions. Next chapter points out one of those and introduces a challenge to whether quasi-realists can truly claim all that they do.

3 FUNDAMENTAL MORAL CERTAINTY

3.1 Smug Quasi-Realism

Last chapter recounted how quasi-realism wants to earn the right to the everyday moral talk from expressivist standpoint. The possibility to doubt moral beliefs, own and others, is one those common ideas most of us subscribe to. Problem for quasi-realists is to explain how that can be done while ditching the representational content of our moral thought. If moral judgements are expressions of non-cognitive states similar to desires, like expressivism states, how can anyone doubt those? After all, we cannot doubt our desires; we either have a desire or do not have one, even if we are uncertain whether we want to act upon it.

Turning back to quasi-realism, and to the project of justifying everyday moral talk for expressivists, the ability to doubt your own moral beliefs seems to be something quasi-realist is required to explain. Simon Blackburn has done just that. According to Blackburn, doubting one's moral judgement is to be open to a possibility that moral judgement might not hold in light of one's *other* judgements and beliefs (Blackburn 1998, 318). The judgement in question could have defects of information, coherence, or imagination, which might be revealed after introspection or by acquiring more information. In other words, doubting of moral beliefs is to be open to a possibility that after an improvement in one's epistemic situation, that belief would be dropped. On Blackburn's famous terms, to doubt your own moral judgement is to "stand on one part of the (Neurath) boat and inspect the others" (Blackburn 1998, 318). Blackburn's view can be expressed as:

QUASI-REALIST UNCERTAINTY: Being uncertain of one's own moral belief is to be open to a possibility that the belief might not survive an improvement in one's epistemic situation.

In his influential article "Quasi-Realism and Fundamental Moral Error" (2007), Andy Egan denies that Blackburn succeeds to vindicate quasi-realism. Egan claims that while it is possible for expressivists to explain what being uncertain or certain of own moral

beliefs is, that explanation is not compatible with quasi-realism as that explanation requires dropping ordinary moral thought (Egan 2007, 206). To make his argument Egan presents three, contradictory claims, which he says quasi-realism is committed to.

Egan's first claim is that quasi-realists are committed to not being smug. If there is a possibility that someone else can make a mistake in moral matters, in the sense of holding an incorrect belief or judgement, I cannot have any *a priori* certainty that I cannot make the same mistake (Egan 2007, 210). To claim otherwise would be smug. The first claim can be defined as:

NO SMUGNESS: There is no *a priori* certainty that if you are mistaken on a moral matter, I cannot be mistaken as well.

Denying smugness is a normative claim, saying that if you can make a mistake, so can I. As a normative claim, smugness does not affect expressivists, as it does not take any stance on normative claims. If expressivism entails smugness, then so be it. However, Egan says quasi-realists cannot be smug by default (Egan 2007, 210). Egan's interpretation is based on speculation of how ordinary moral thought and discourse works, as well as Simon Blackburn's own words (Egan 2007, 210). At least from the outset, Egan's supposition does not seem too outlandish. Claiming ourselves immune to an error which others could make does seem to be incompatible with ordinary moralizing and so it goes against the goal of quasi-realism.

The second claim Egan makes is about the stability of a moral belief or judgement. With a stable belief Egan means that despite any possible improvement of the epistemic situation, like gaining more information or after hearing a convincing argument to the contrary, that belief would not be abandoned (Egan 2007, 212). Egan also calls this kind of a stable judgement a *fundamental* belief, as it must be part of the core beliefs of a person. However, even if person A would not drop her moral belief M, making it a fundamental belief, does not mean that she is right. Person B might as well have a fundamental moral belief that non-M and, ruling out moral relativism, at most one of them is right. The second claim is:

STABLE ERROR: It is possible for someone's stable belief to be mistaken (Egan 2007, 213).

Egan's third claim is compared with Blackburn's definition of quasi-realist uncertainty. Egan fully endorses Blackburn's explanation of uncertainty as the only viable one for expressivists (Egan 2007, 214). But taken together, QUASI-REALIST UNCERTAINTY is about wondering if one would drop the belief in question after an improvement in epistemic situation, but if the belief in question is a stable belief, it would not be changed after any improvement. This means that no stable belief can be doubted so that a quasi-realist is necessarily committed to:

FIRST-PERSON IMMUNITY: I have an *a priori* guarantee against fundamental moral error (Egan 2007, 214).

FIRST-PERSON IMMUNITY does not mean *a priori* certainty about any particular belief: it is a certainty about the sentence "I cannot have a stable moral belief, which is mistaken". The *a priori* certainty does not extend to other people's beliefs. As STABLE BELIEF entails, other people's stable beliefs can be doubted. I can judge that even if someone has a stable moral belief and would not change it no matter what improvement in their epistemic situation, nevertheless they should change that belief. It seems that a quasi-realist has a privilege to say that she, and only she, cannot be fundamentally mistaken.

It is easy to see that if Egan's argumentation is correct, quasi-realists are committed to conflicting claims. If people's stable beliefs can be mistaken, but *my* stable beliefs cannot be mistaken, I violate NO SMUGNESS. It looks like one of the claims must be abandoned for quasi-realism to be internally coherent.

3.2 Re-defining the Task

The problem described in the last section has come under scrutiny and Egan's analysis turns out to be critically flawed. Simon Blackburn has written about the issue, and his reply is significant beyond just replying to Egan. Blackburn clarifies just what quasi-

realist expressivism is committed to and how Egan makes a mistake in what is the question that expressivists are actually trying to answer. Egan's mistake turns out to be a common one. This section will explain Blackburn's reply and after that, revisit Egan's problem statement with Sebastian Köhler in order to find out what type of explanation is really needed from quasi-realists regarding uncertainty and stable beliefs.

Blackburn focuses on the term "stability"[2] when presenting his counter-argument. Blackburn points out that Egan's use of "stability" is not precise and can be understood in two widely different senses (Blackburn 2009, 205-206). A stable moral belief can be understood as a belief that the believer would not abandon due to any change in her epistemic situation, which she would consider as an improvement. The key concept here is the improvement of the epistemic situation. While an improvement in an epistemic situation is easy to think of, like learning that the Great Wall of China cannot really be seen from the space, what is a change in the epistemic situation that the belief holder would not think as an improvement? One option would be a change brought about by deceit or misinformation. A more interesting one would be a case where the belief holder would not in her current situation endorse the change. In the current American political climate, it is easy to imagine that even if a deeply-rooted Republican could learn something which would make her a Democrat, in her current state she would not think that change an improvement. Understood like this, stability is a matter of subjective opinion at the moment of thinking about the belief.

Another way to understand a stabile moral belief is that the belief would not change after any improvement in the epistemic situation of the believer. The crucial difference to the earlier definition is that now the improvement does not take into account what the believer herself thinks about the improvement. The improvement is now a genuine improvement, making it an objective fact. As these two senses of the word "stability" is used in Egan's article, he mixes subjective and objective perspectives in his argumentation. As Blackburn points out, the latter one results in a stable belief which is unarguably a true belief: if the belief cannot be improved at all, it must be true (Blackburn 2009, 206). After all, learning the truth would be an objective improvement. If improvement is understood

[2] This, incidentally, is the only term that Egan uses which does not originate from Blackburn himself. So, Blackburn's focus on this specific term is not that surprising.

in this objective sense the STABLE ERROR, which said that people's stable beliefs can be mistaken, is false.

To salvage the STABLE ERROR, stability must be understood in its subjective sense. However, if this is so, the FIRST-PERSON IMMUNITY, which said that I have *a priori* certainty that my stable belief is true, can be understood to be a normative judgement. Or so expressivists would say, as the FIRST-PERSON IMMUNITY could now be understood to state: if I judge that any improvement, which I endorse, in my epistemic situation would not warrant dropping a belief, that belief is true. Now, this is a claim about what *is* a true moral judgement, and a very implausible one as well. As Blackburn is keen to emphasise, expressivism and quasi-realism are not in the business of offering answers to these types of questions (Blackburn 2009, 207). Quasi-realist is a quietist about moral truth: she takes no sides or provides answers to moral questions while doing metaethics.

Quietism about what are moral truths, and what makes a moral judgement a true judgment, is in the heart of expressivism. Blackburn's answer to Egan illustrates that expressivists only need to explain what we do when are making judgements on moral issues. The quasi-realist package only adds a commitment to explain why those judgements can be said to be true or false, not why they are so. Objective truth conditions are outside of a quasi-realist analysis. Egan demands answers from quasi-realists which they do not need to give. Be that as it may, a slight rephrasing and refocus of Egan's problem statement gives quasi-realists a more difficult problem to solve. Sebastian Köhler accepts Blackburn's answer to Egan but modifies the challenge to focus on what Blackburn is promising to give: an explanation of what is the state of mind of a subject when she doubts a judgement she judges stable (Köhler 2015, 163).

Remember that Blackburn's explanation of uncertainty, QUASI-REALIST UNCERTAINTY, was expressing a possibility that a moral belief might change after an improvement in the epistemic situation. Taking this as a starting point, Köhler describes a machine called "moral sensibility" that generates moral judgements from mental states. Much like a coffee machine takes coffee beans and water as an input and after a specific process outputs a coffee, moral sensibility eats mental states and produces moral

judgements. This moral sensibility is similar to mechanical machines also in that the parts that make it, mental dispositions, are individually changeable. Köhler now argues that "improvement" can be understood in terms of changing some of the mental dispositions in order to have a better moral sensibility, in effect a better machine for generating moral judgements. (Köhler 2015, 163.)

Taking the above as a starting point, judging that A's moral belief M can be erroneous would now be a complex judgement, consisting of two different sub-judgements:

(1) A judgement that any sensibility S(x) is better than any other sensibility S(y), if S(x) has certain features F(1), F(2),...., or F(x) which S(y) lacks.
(2) A judgment that there might be (at least) one feature F(x), which is such that A's sensibility S lacks it and such that, if A's sensibility changed so that it had F(x), M would be abandoned. (Köhler 2015, 163).

First sub-judgement is about having a general understanding that some sensibilities are better than other sensibilities based on some features. These features are dependent on the person making the judgement, so these can be anything from coherence to kindness. The second sub-judgement is then all about pointing out that A's moral sensibility might lack a feature which would make it a better sensibility, and that this would also mean that A would abandon belief M.

To push the original analogy further, we are now judging that this coffee machine might produce worse coffee than another coffee machine, because it lacks a part that the other coffee machine has. In this way, Köhler is highlighting the result from Blackburn's idea that it is the process, not the belief itself, which should be under investigation. When we are uncertain whether one of our moral belief's is correct, we are not focusing on the belief itself, but are wondering whether the process which produced that belief is somehow faulty.

After defining uncertainty, Köhler comes to the issue of stability. To think that an agent A's moral judgement M is stable is to pass a judgement on what A thinks in the following way:

(3) A judgment that A would not consider any sensibility that would not produce moral belief M better than A's sensibility S, which does produce moral belief M.

As someone who is not A, judging that belief M is mistaken is a coherent thought. The above three judgements do not contradict each other, so anyone not-A is free to express that A's belief M is both stable and that it might be erroneous. Now the trouble for expressivists comes when she should doubt her own belief J, that she also judges stable. In this case, she would need to express these three thoughts:

(1) A judgement that any sensibility S(x) is better than any other sensibility S(y), if S(x) has certain features F(1), F(2),...., or F(x) which S(y) lacks.
(4) A judgment that there might be (at least) one feature F(x), which is such that my sensibility S(z) lacks it and such that, if my sensibility changed so that it had F(x), I would abandon J.
(5) A judgment that no other sensibility S(x) that would not produce moral belief J is better than my sensibility S, which does produce moral belief J.

As can be seen, this is not a coherent thought. It seems that if (1) is a good description of error, and (5) is what a judgement of stability means, (4) is an impossible thought. Based on this result, Köhler concludes that an expressivist does have an *a priori* guarantee that she, and only she, cannot be fundamentally mistaken. (Köhler 2015, 164-165.)

While well formulated, Köhler's conclusion seems to be a bit too quick. What Köhler is looking for is for Blackburn to explain what is the mental state that you have when you judge your belief stable, but also possibly mistaken. Now the question is not anymore about what a mistaken belief is, or what makes a belief wrong. It is about the mental states that we have when doing these kinds of judgements, and that really is something expressivists and quasi-realists must say something about. However, just the fact that these two judgements cannot co-exists when thinking about a *particular* belief does not mean any *a priori* certainty that we cannot be wrong *in general*. What it means is that when we judge our belief stable, we cannot entertain that it can also be a false belief. This

inability to doubt is a far cry from *a priori* certainty that *if* we judge something stable, we cannot be wrong.

This does not mean that the threat of smugness is not still very much present. If it turns out that expressivism cannot accommodate a mental state that allows for doubting our own stable moral belief while allowing to judge everyone else's stable moral beliefs false, quasi-realism faces the judgement of smugness that Egan accused it of. While Blackburn correctly identified a problem with Egan's account, the argument can be rewritten so that it still needs a better answer than what Blackburn gave. The argument will be explored in the next section from this new understanding at what is really at stake and what should be expected from a quasi-realist's answer to it.

3.3 Going Ecumenical

As was seen in the last section, quasi-realists and expressivists need to give accounts of what mental states are involved in judging a moral belief to be stable, while being uncertain of it as well. If they cannot give that explanation, they risk being called smug and quasi-realism fails to achieve its goal. It comes as no surprise that answers from expressivists concentrate on exploring those two mental states. Concentrating on the mental states involved also means that while the problem is more severe for quasi-realists, all the answers seek to vindicate the problem by exploring how expressivism in general should be modified so that it avoids the accusation of smugness. The answer, it seems, lies in vindicating all expressivists, not just quasi-realists.

Michael Ridge modifies the original formulation of doubting our own moral belief to better suit his form of expressivism, called ecumenical expressivism. Expressivism comes in different flavours and the original one explained in the section 2.1 is called pure expressivism. As discussed, expressivism says that a normative judgement gets its meaning from the non-cognitive state of mind of the agent expressing the judgement (Toppinen 2014, 13). Pure expressivism only deals with this one non-cognitive state of mind whereas a later form of expressivism says that a normative judgement has a descriptive part as well. The meaning of a normative judgement still comes from the non-cognitive state of mind, but two states of mind are expressed at the same time. In the

simplest way, the normative judgement can express a dislike of actions of some type and a belief that a certain action has those consequences. To be against littering could be expressing a desire for maximising happiness and a belief that littering will hinder that pursuit. This type of expressivism is called hybrid expressivism.

Ridge's ecumenical expressivism started as a hybrid theory but has evolved into an even more complex theory, called relational expressivism. According to relational expressivism, our normative judgements express a relational state, where our desire-like states and beliefs are related in a suitable way. Ridge's ecumenical expressivism is, highly simplified, an explanation of normative and epistemic judgements as expressing normative perspectives, which rule out standards, and a belief suitably related to that perspective (Ridge 2015, 8-9). The normative perspective is Ridge's term for the traditional nonrepresentative state of mind, which expressivism claims is at the bottom of a normative belief. However, unlike most traditional expressivists, Ridge thinks that this normative perspective only rules out normative standards (Ridge 2015, 8).

How does all of this work? Ridge (2015, 9) gives an example of what a judgment of "morally I must give to charity" would consist of according to his theory. To make a judgement that "giving to a charity is morally required" consists of a normative perspective and a belief that all acceptable moral standards (i.e. those not ruled out by the aforementioned normative perspective) would require us to give to a charity, where moral standard is a shorthand for all of an agent's moral principles in a given time (Ridge 2015, 9). In this way, the normative perspective denies endorsement of some moral principles, in effect committing the agent to act in ways not described by these denied moral principles, and the belief part of the normative judgement describes the situation as one that would be acceptable for a moral principle not ruled out in this way. In a way, the normative perspective sets the scene of what is a permissible way to reason, and the belief then describes that the situation in question would either be endorsed or not endorsed by permissible reasoning.

As Ridge's account is different from standard expressivism endorsed by Blackburn, he also gives a different formulation of uncertainty. Ridge's formulation taps into the epistemic standards that you endorse (or what your normative perspective allows for you

to have, to be exact) and what certitude that epistemic standard allows for the moral judgement in question. This makes uncertainty a hybrid state that expresses two states of mind:

(6) a normative perspective
(7) a belief that some admissible epistemic standard (that is, some such standard compatible with the speaker's normative perspective at the time of utterance) would, given some contextually specified body of evidence, permit not assigning a much higher credence to p than not-p, if one assigns them credences at all. (Ridge 2015, 12).

As with the purely normative case of moral judgements, the epistemic judgement of uncertainty also deals with standards of thinking and reasoning which are not permitted. The difference to the moral version is that the epistemic judgment is about permitting a standard, which would permit a credence assignment. Note that this is only about permitting a thought that the moral judgement in question could not be true, so it is a counterfactual situation, not a definite doubt. For Ridge, being uncertain about a moral belief like "killing is wrong" is to think that there is a permissible way of thinking about the issue that would permit (an unspecified amount of) lowering of credence about that issue. It is not actually giving the judgment lower credence, but simply entertaining the idea that it would be ok for it to be lower.

Now that uncertainty is defined for ecumenical expressivists, is it compatible with a judgement of stability? Initially, Ridge says yes. A stable belief would now be:

(8) agent A's belief p, where given agent's epistemic standards, normative perspective and evidence, it is permissible for A to have much higher credence on p than not-p and any subjective improvements A can have would not overturn that state of affairs (Ridge 2015, 14).

In more simple terms, judging some belief stable is to judge that it is more much likely to be the case that that belief is true than that it is false, and to think that this will not change. How much more likely it needs to be is not defined by Ridge, but somewhere

around the vicinity of full certainty is what he seems to be after. According to Ridge, demanding full certainty from a potential stable belief would be too strict, as people are rarely entirely certain of anything if pressed hard enough (Ridge 2015, 12-13). For now, we can accept Ridge's argument and move on, but we will return to this point later on in this thesis. The latter part of the judgement of stability is the actual stability part, as that says that this state of (near) certainty would not change after any improvements A recognises as improvements.

Ridge points out that combining the judgements of stability and uncertainty is now contradictory. (2) would not permit assigning much higher credence to p given the evidence, but (3) would simultaneously permit just that. Permitting and not-permitting the credence assignment with the same evidence is not coherent. To salvage the situation, Ridge gives an ingenious account by describing that the counterfactual situations described in the case of uncertainty and in the judgement of stability are different. As Köhler already mentioned, uncertainty is expressed by "this belief might be mistaken". According to Ridge, in this sentence "might" applies to all possible worlds. When being uncertain of something, you allow that something you have not even thought possible could come up and overturn your belief (Ridge 2015, 16-17). In contrast, the judgement of stability concerns only *nearby* worlds. When judging that p is a stable belief, we only think about relatively close possibilities of what we might encounter and how we would then behave (Ridge 2015, 16-17). By making the two situation describe different modalities, Ridge can say that the stability judgement's "would not overturn this belief" is compatible with the "this belief might be mistaken" of uncertainty. The example Ridge gives is that he is really certain that if he drops a pen, it would drop to the floor, but at the same time can entertain the possibility that in a distant possible world it might not do that (Ridge 2015, 17). As for a moral example, we could say that I have a stable belief that "giving to a charity is a good thing", but would not rule out that if I met a moral saint whom I would respect, she could overturn this belief, as unlikely as that is. The "would" does not make the belief 100% certain.

As ingenious as Ridge's ides is, it does not ultimately succeed in saving expressivism and quasi-realism. Quite simply, just changing the "would not" to "could not" in the definition

of stability will undo all the progress Ridge makes, as he himself acknowledges. While "would" can be thought as a counterfactual condition where we think about the possibilities we might imagine happening, "could" takes into account all possible worlds. Now both stability and uncertainty are operating with the same modality. Thus, while Ridge does a commendable job in describing the states of minds in detail, he does not solve the issue of smugness. Ridge knows this and bites the bullet: he acknowledges that expressivists end up in a situation that no realist needs to end up, and that this really is a smug situation (Ridge 2015, 18). In expressivism's defence, he says that anyone who judges their moral judgement to be this stable is smug in any case and so that should not be thought as a defect of expressivism (Ridge 2015, 18). While probably a reasonable conclusion, this does not leave Egan's argument's force to be any less than it is in the original form. All expressivists are still committed to smugness regarding their own stable moral beliefs. In the end, all Ridge accomplishes is to further clarify the technical details of the challenge, but not solve the problem.

3.4 Introducing I-trajectory

Like Michael Ridge, Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons (2015) also aim to solve the challenge by clarifying the main terms in question, stability and uncertainty. As Ridge, Horgan and Timmons aim to show that all expressivists can avoid being smug, and so their focus is on the expressivist explanation of the issue. The route that they take is, alas, a rather complicated one. Their explanation, and its problems, are explained in this section.

To understand what it means to acknowledge that one might be wrong according to Horgan and Timmons, a few terms need to be defined first. First of all, they call the process of improvement *I-trajectory*, which is a factually accurate, cognitively competent, seeming-improvement trajectory (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 197). In plainer terms, to have an I-trajectory is to experience a change in one's moral beliefs that relies on only correct non-moral beliefs, is seen by one as an improvement and is an exercise of one's cognitive competences, i.e. is a result of one's own thought process. Stability is defined as an exclusion from this improvement process, and it is called *I-stability*. An I-stable moral belief is one that has no I-trajectories that could lead to a situation, where

that belief would be abandoned (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 197). So, an I-stable belief can only be changed by violating one of the clauses of I-trajectory, and thus that change is not an improvement. As can be seen, the "I-trajectory" is the key term here, with "I-stability" just referencing whether there exists an I-trajectory or not. Stability is now a question of whether a process exists that could overturn the belief in question.

Now for the uncertainty. For Horgan and Timmons (2015, 197), uncertainty in the form of a sentence "Ought p, but I might be mistaken" expresses a complex state of mind consisting of two different commitments:

(1) a belief about an open epistemic possibility that some I-trajectory would lead me to a state of mind of not-ought p that is I-stable
(2) not-ought p, if an I-trajectory would lead me to a state of mind of not-ought p, that is I-stable

What this means is that being less than entirely sure of "I should stop eating meat" is to be open to the idea that an improvement (as specified in I-trajectory) can lead me to abandon that moral belief. Horgan and Timmons use "open epistemic possibility" to denote that the uncertainty can arise from a wide variety of possibilities, which might not even be metaphysically possible. For example, I can engage in philosophically inclined debates about brain-in-the-vat such that I can confidently assert that I am not one, but still leave it as an open epistemic possibility (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 198). In this way Horgan and Timmons define uncertainty in similar way as Ridge does: uncertainty ranges across all possible worlds.

As for the primary challenge, it is quite clear that Horgan and Timmons formulation of uncertainty and stability clash. If uncertainty admits a possibility that an I-trajectory might exist, and stability explicitly denies that such an I-trajectory could exist, these two states of minds cannot coexist. What Horgan and Timmons surprisingly get wrong is that they concede the *a priori* problem, which Andy Egan proposed, based on this. What they say is that this formulation of Egan's argument holds:

A PRIORI TRUTH*:* For any actual or potential moral opinion M of mine such that no I-trajectory would take me from M to a state of mind M* such that (i) M* is incompatible with M, and (ii) M* is I-stable, M is correct (Horgan and Timmons 2015, 202).

But if we recall the formulation of I-trajectory, it stated that the improvement must be perceived as an improvement by the belief holder. If we remember Simon Blackburn's response to Egan, this is now actually a normative judgement about what is a correct moral opinion. Ruling out all I-trajectories does not mean stating that a moral opinion is true, unless that is how "a true moral opinion" is defined. As I-trajectory needs subjective experience of improvement, it is a widely unrealistic definition. And as Blackburn already stated, expressivists and quasi-realists are in no way required to make any commitments on what a true moral opinion is. In light of this, Horgan and Timmons should acknowledge instead what Sebastian Köhler demanded expressivists to explain: how can an expressivist express both uncertainty in a moral belief and a judgement of stability on that same moral belief. This latter statement is something which Horgan and Timmons can, and should, concede as impossible.

In any case, Horgan and Timmons devote much of their account on explaining why the above account is not problematic. The above clarification does already lessen the value of some of their explanations. For example, they make a believable claim that one cannot have any guarantees that a specific moral belief is I-stable and make assumptions based on this claim. But whether any belief is actually I-stable does not really matter, as the real question is about a situation where one has *judged* that belief to be I-stable. If it actually is immune to change is another question altogether.

Taking the above into account, Horgan and Timmons still have two arguments worth considering. First of all, they identify that smugness arises most clearly on disagreement. If I have an opinion on a moral matter which is contrary to yours, and I rule out doubting my own opinion, I do seem to be a prime example of a smug person. Horgan and Timmons do not endorse this view. They claim that preferring your opinions is natural; people do, and even should, give their views more weight than someone else's beliefs (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 202). In a fundamental disagreement with someone else, where our position is presenting our stable belief, we are entitled to hold ourselves to be correct

without being labelled as smug. In discussion with an intellectual peer, whom we end up in a disagreement with, it is sensible to hold our own opinion correct if we have examined the contrary argument and evidence with due diligence (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 202). If we disagree after due diligence, we conclude that the evidence does not point to the direction our opponent has ended, which means he has a skewed or somehow wrong epistemic sensibility (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 202). In a peer disagreement, with equal access and understanding of facts, we end up blaming the opponent's epistemic capabilities. Horgan and Timmons also note that according to expressivists, that is a normative judgement: we judge the opponent's epistemic standards to be incorrect (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 203).

While the previous explanation does seem plausible, it is by no means an acknowledged truth among epistemologists. Going into that debate is out of scope for this thesis, so it is just be pointed out that while Horgan and Timmons do have one possibility to defuse the smugness, it is by no means enough as it relies on somewhat controversial idea. This leads us to the next line of defence they have.

To illustrate the argument, Horgan and Timmons give a different analysis of the problematic state of minds:

NO I-TRAJECTORIES ERROR: Ought p, and yet I might be wrong even if it is *not* the case that some I-trajectory would take me from my current ought-p state of mind to a not-ought p state of mind that would be I-stable (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 204).

NO I-TRAJECTORIES ERROR is simply stating the uncertainty and stability is other words. But Horgan and Timmons dissect NO I-TRAJECTORIES ERROR as two different state of minds in a totally new way. According to them, the "ought p" is a normative judgement, and all that follow is a metaethical and metaphysical judgement (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 205). This latter part would now be a judgement of epistemic possibility of error even with no self-recognised possibilities of improvement. This is, according to Horgan and Timmons, an ontological commitment to moral properties, which expressivists would deny (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 205). While the judgement looks like a normal moral judgement, they define this as *morally detached* use of the

moral terms (Horgan & Timmons 2015, 207-208). It does not concern any of your current first-order moral judgements, instead it is about metaphysics. If Horgan and Timmons are correct, expressivists can acknowledge that for them, NO I-TRAJECTORIES ERROR is an impossible state of mind, but that the question is about metaethics, not ordinary normative talk and so there is no problem.

It is not clear if Horgan and Timmons are right about moving the issue to metaethics. After all, it is not clear what should be understood as a metaethical question versus ordinary normative or moral talk. If only invoking a seemingly ontological commitment on moral properties is required to change the judgement from everyday moralizing to metaethics, that can have unintended consequences. For example, saying "it is true that killing is wrong, and it is true no matter what I think" seems to express an ontological commitment to moral truth, but it is still a judgement which a quasi-realists would want to enable for us. Unless clearer reasons for the move are put forward, it remains an open question whether the issue properly belongs to metaethics and could be ignored by expressivists. Horgan and Timmon's answer also does not help to mitigate the smugness question. Denying NO I-TRAJECTORIES ERROR is only relevant when thinking of my own moral judgments, but even if you have no available I-trajectories that would lead you to abandon your current belief, I can still say you have an error. The asymmetry of error-possibility remains a problem to be solved.

What this all means, in the end, is that Ridge, Horgan and Timmons are all biting the bullet. They all give accounts of what it means to doubt one's moral judgements and what a judgement of stability means, but in the end, all agree that expressivists are committed to Egan's charge of asymmetry. Solving or explaining the smugness is critical for quasi-realism to be internally coherent. Why is it not smug to not being able to doubt your stable moral beliefs, while still retaining the possibility to doubt other persons stable moral beliefs? In the next section we will explore how James Lenman has tried to defuse the charge of smugness.

3.5 Different Moral Communities

As seen in the previous section, expressivists and quasi-realists face the accusation of smugness no matter how uncertainty and stability are defined. If expressivists need to concede that you cannot doubt your own stable beliefs, while everyone else's stable belief are suspect, they are committed to smugness and quasi-realism looks likely to fail. We already saw how Michael Ridge, Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons all conceded that the asymmetry exists and that this smugness is a threat to quasi-realism. They all tried to downplay the accusation of smugness, with varying success. Before summarising the findings and proposing a way forward, this section goes through how James Lenman attempts to solve the same problem by approaching the problem from a different angle from everyone else.

Main body of Lenman's argument explores what smugness really is and where it manifests. He concludes that while Blackburn managed to defuse part of Egan's accusation by exploring the difference between a true improvement and an improvement as a subjective judgement, quasi-realist must still worry about the smugness (Lenman 2014, 238). To illustrate his point, Lenman considers cases where the fundamental disagreement might happen between two people. Fundamental disagreement is where the smugness, as it is, will manifest: if we have a fundamental disagreement regarding a particular moral belief, I will hold myself right and you wrong, and I will believe that it is a defensible position to be in. Is this smug?

Lenman argues that the problem of smugness is avoided by focusing on what a conversation between people is all about. For Lenman the idea is that in a normal conversation we do listen each other, and try to end up in an agreement, as that is what living in a shared community is all about (Lenman 2014, 241). If we engage in this type of productive conversation, we cannot be accused of smugness. While Lenman invokes some virtue ethics in his article to justify this result, and thus takes the discussion slightly out of metaethics, what he successfully does is to highlight that a truly fundamental moral disagreement[3] is a rare thing. We usually presuppose that our disagreement is not

[3] To make the terms explicitly clear: to have a fully *moral* disagreement needs both participants to agree upon non-moral things first. To disagree upon f.e. the wrongness of killing infidels

fundamental when we engage in a conversation (Lenman 2014, 242). Otherwise, what would be the point of that conversation?

While that might be a correct view about our everyday life, there lingers a doubt that fundamental disagreement about moral issues is possible. We can readily imagine beings so different that we would be in a fundamental disagreement with them. What Lenman says about that situation is not fully satisfactory. He concludes that a discussion with these kinds of beings is pointless, but nonetheless, he would not want to draw a smug conclusion that he is right while those alien others from a totally different moral community are wrong (Lenman 2014, 243). The aliens are just different, not wrong. Smugness, in Lenman's terms, appears to be a vice that can only manifest between beings from the same moral community. It seems that Lenman thinks we do not belong to the same moral community if we have a fundamental moral disagreement, and thus smugness is not implied by *just* being certain that our moral beliefs are stable. For Lenman, a community is about people sharing some norms or standards, which to live by. A fundamental separation of moral values will separate communities by definition, and cross-community judgments are not about wrongness, they just express differences.

While he might have a point here, it does not seem to exhaust all the relevant options. In particular, I would not personally want to say that alien others, whom I have a fundamental disagreement with, are not wrong. If they come up with a moral judgement of "wanton cruelty is desirable", I will judge that they are wrong. Furthermore, I will be pretty smug about my judgment and insist that I could not be wrong in this issue. Smugness can thus arise, even if the participants in the disagreement are from different moral communities. In the end, Lenman's suggestion faces the same objections as all the other attempted solutions. No matter how much explanations quasi-realists offer, there seems to remain a sense by which all expressivists are committed to something that

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needs first agreement about God's existence and relevant facts about God's commands. These are all descriptive beliefs, not moral or normative. To have a fully moral disagreement means that both participants share agreement about all descriptive facts affecting the issue and only disagree on what moral judgements should be drawn. Useful, if not fully accepted, explanation of moral disagreement can be found in C.L. Stevenson: *Ethics and Language* (1944). Also, for present purposes, fundamental disagreement can only arise between beings that are fully rational and fully informed. That rarely, if ever, is the case between actual human beings.

realists are not, and that the realist's position seems to line better with ordinary moral thought.

What this chapter has explored is the question of what certainty in moral beliefs is, how is the improvement of moral views defined, and what happens in a situation of a fundamental moral disagreement. Egan's original accusation was flawed in many ways, and the crux of the issue really lies in the question of smugness and why the two mental states of stability and uncertainty are in conflict. As Köhler demanded, expressivists and quasi-realists are fully accountable for explaining what type of mental states are in play when you doubt your stable judgements, or at least for clarifying why that is not possible in the normative case so that the common normative thought can be preserved.

While no account explored here succeeded in solving the previous question, Michael Ridge did accomplish to point out that the concept of certitude is linked with both stability and uncertainty as understood here. The most useful bit of Ridge's article might turn out to be his investigation of how much certitude a stability judgement presupposes. Ridge argues that "must" is typically used in ordinary moral discourse and thought without committing to full certainty, which is why he explained stability in terms of much higher credence in p versus not-p (Ridge 2015, 12-13). He reasoned that only a critically few judgements or beliefs are as certain as the proposition that "1+1=2" is, and thus demanding equivalent certitude would be too much. For Ridge, this means that we need to allow for stable beliefs to be at least marginally less than fully certain in order to account for ordinary normative discourse. But is this so, and how less than full certainty and full certainty should even be understood?

It is clear that credences need to be investigated more thoroughly to get to the bottom of this question. Awkwardly for quasi-realists, it turns out that accounting certitude of normative judgements might be particularly problematic for expressivism. Exploring the problems that have been raised about credence will shed light on the issues dealt with in this chapter. The next chapter explains why credences are problematic for expressivists and how all existing expressivism-friendly attempts to explain credences have so far failed.

4 PROBLEMATIC CREDENCES

4.1 Three Features of a Moral Belief

As we have seen in the previous chapters, expressivism proposes a seemingly radically different view of what a moral belief or an evaluative judgement is and how it functions. The flipside of this view is that it exposes expressivism to an accusation that it cannot capture all the complexities of a belief that cognitivism can. In the previous chapter we saw that uncertainty in beliefs which we judge stable is one the problems expressivism and quasi-realism faces. At the end of the last chapter it was argued that full certainty and credences must be investigated more thoroughly in order to find out what the judgement of stability means. Unfortunately, accounting for credences is one of these complexities of a belief which expressivism has trouble to explain. This section will outline how Michael Smith identifies three features of moral beliefs and evaluative judgements, how he argues that expressivists cannot accommodate all three, and why credence seems to be the most difficult to one for expressivists.

Michael Smith states that when an agent has a belief, common sense tells us that it has two features. The first is the level of confidence or certitude we have about that belief, and the second is how robust that belief is (Smith 2002, 306-307). Confidence about a belief is in effect the level of certainty that that belief is true. Now, this certitude can vary between different beliefs; I am very certain that Finland is part of the European Union, a bit less certain that my older son is currently at home and somewhat uncertain that it will rain tomorrow. If for some reason these different beliefs would clash, and I would be required to act according to one, and only one, of these beliefs, all things being equal I would act according to the one that I have the most certainty of being right.

Unarguably confidence in different beliefs comes in degrees. The conventional way to capture this is to normalise the degree of belief as ranging between 0 and 1, with 0 being utter disbelief and 1 absolute certainty (Schwitzgebel 2019). In this way, the confidence levels of different beliefs can be compared. A natural way to explain normalised degrees of belief in action is to use betting behaviour as an analogy, as Smith also does (Smith

2002, 307). A normalised degrees of belief is described as the amount that a subject is willing to wager on the bet that will pay 0 if the outcome is negative and 1 if the outcome is positive. If I am uncertain that it will rain tomorrow, but still regard it as a more likely situation than not raining, I should bet more than 0,5, but less than 1. As is the case with many other philosophical inquiries, several names are applied to the same concept; confidence, certitude, certainty, degree of belief, credence. While the names have slightly different connotations, and for example degree of a belief is commonly thought as a misleading name, they all mean the same thing: how confident an agent is that a proposition is true.

The second feature, robustness of a belief, is closely connected to the certitude but captures a different facet of it. According to Smith, robustness captures how likely or how much the belief in question varies in time (Smith 2002, 308). The variance is explained by incoming information and reflection on the subject, which might affect an agent's certitude of the belief in question. Robustness of a belief can thus also be called the stability of a belief: how likely it is that this belief of mine will change in time, and thus not dissimilar to the concept Egan introduced and was encountered earlier in this thesis. To illustrate the issue, Smith asks us to consider a case where a mother is currently equally certain that her son is a responsible supermarket worker, and that her local football team is the most talented one (Smith 2002, 308). While the certitude of both of her beliefs is the same, the belief in her son's responsibility can easily be believed to be more robust than her belief in the competence of a football team. Some of the reasons are psychological (maybe she does not want to believe any contrary evidence of her son's behaviour), but some can be called epistemological (maybe she already knows more about her son's situation and behaviour than the abilities of a football team). In any case, the difference should be clear. It takes more to change some beliefs than others.

In addition to these two features, moral beliefs also have a third one: how important we deem the belief in question. An example will clarify the concept. If an agent believes both free time and material wellbeing as desirable, we can always ask the question: "which is more desirable?". To fully explore the concept, this question presupposes that in making those two judgements, the agent is omniscient, and both her beliefs have equal certitude. Also, to fully make the commitments explicit, we need to have a condition that at some

point the increase of free time will decrease material wellbeing and vice versa. So, the real question is that when things are in balance, should there be more material wellbeing or more free time? The importance of these beliefs to the agent decides on what she answers.

As Smith highlights, all these different features affect how motivated we are to perform different actions. If certitude is the same, rational agents act according to the belief which has more importance and vice versa: if the importance of two beliefs is the same, rational agents should act according to the more certain belief. Lastly, the motivation to do different actions should follow the robustness of the belief. More robust an agent's belief, the motivation to follow that belief changes less in time. In order to explain the motivation to do actions, a theory of moral beliefs should be able to explain all these features. Smith argues that while cognitivist can explain why moral beliefs have these three features, non-cognitivists cannot (Smith 2002, 316).

Smith's point is illustrated best by using a pure expressivist theory as an example. As previously discussed, pure expressivism states that evaluative judgements are not beliefs, but expressions of desire-like states. Thus, pure expressivists need to explain all the three features of evaluative judgements with features that desires have. Herein lies the problem, as desires seem to have only two features: strength and variance over time (Smith 2002, 316). Subject's desire of two different things can vary over how much subject desires them, and how the desire changes over time. When thinking of the three features Smith highlights, robustness can be mapped to the variance over time, but then the single feature of desire strength has to explain two different features, both importance and certitude (Smith 2002, 316-317). Smith poses a challenge for non-cognitivists: how to accommodate all these three features into their story of moral beliefs and judgements.

4.2 Hybrid Solution

As seen from the previous section, traditional pure expressivism faces the problem that it does not have enough structure to accommodate all the common-sense features of moral beliefs. A simple non-cognitive state-of-mind comparable to a desire does not seem to give room for all the relevant features that Smith has identified. Both Michael Ridge and

Jimmy Lenman have proposed that a hybrid version of expressivism could take care of all the three features. As explained earlier in section 3.3, hybrid expressivism says that when a moral judgement is made, an agent expresses both a desire and a belief (Toppinen 2014, 48). Simplified, hybrid expressivism says that the desire expressed with a moral judgement is a desire for some things that are K and the belief expressed with the same moral judgement is that the object of the judgement is K.[4]

Both Lenman and Ridge adopt features from Smith's proposal of how a cognitivist can implement these three features. Smith (2002, 311) proposes that when we make a judgement that something is desirable, we have a belief that if we would be purged of all cognitive limitations and rational failings, we would still make the same judgement. To be purged of all cognitive limitations and rational failings would make us, in this case, and according to our belief, an ideal person to do the judgment. Or so says Smith. Ridge casts doubt on this and points out that calling a person without cognitive limitations and rational failings an ideal person to give judgments is actually a normative judgement (Ridge 2003, section 2). As he points out, someone might want that person to be altruistic while another would not. What Ridge is here suggesting is that as the characterisation of an ideal person is in itself a normative judgement, it is unfit for the role Smith gives it.

In light of this, Ridge proposes a way of explaining normative judgements, with a slight modification to Smith's ideal person idea. Ridge suggests that when an agent makes a normative judgement about an action, she expresses a desire to do actions that the ideal advisor she endorses would recommend and that this action is a one that the advisor would recommend (Ridge 2003, section 2). What kind of ideal advisor they would think of would change from person to person, as would the imagined recommendations of said advisor. Ridge's proposal does not make any qualifications on the advisor she would have, or indeed on the recommendations of the said advisor. Those are the business of first-order ethics.

[4] What is said here of moral and evaluative judgements naturally apply to all moral beliefs, but to make the difference between hybrid expressivism and cognitivist realism clear, "moral judgement" is widely used in this chapter. As already gone through in section 2.3, expressivists tend to use "judgement" to make the difference to realism clear, but quasi-realists want to reclaim the right to use "belief". This tends to cause problems with terminology, but as the terms are used here, "judgement" and "belief" are mostly interchangeable.

In the above proposal the concept of certitude is simply the level of an agent's confidence that her ideal advisor would recommend this action and the strength of her desire to act according to the advisor's recommendations, robustness is her judgement's resistance to change and importance just maps different actions in the order that her ideal advisor would endorse them (Ridge 2003, section 2). In this way Ridge can explain all the three features that require explanation. It is vital to notice *how* Ridge does this; the critical element in evading the problem that pure expressivism faces is to introduce the belief component to the judgement. Now certitude is not only a feature or strength of a desire-like attitude but also consists of the strength of the subject's belief that the action really would be recommended by her ideal advisor. Much like moral judgements overall in hybrid expressivism, certitude also turns out to be a hybrid function of both a belief and a desire-like attitude.

Jimmy Lenman's account is almost identical to Ridge's version, but Lenman explains certitude of a moral judgement only with the belief part of the expressed judgement, ditching the strength of the desire according to the way ideal advisor would recommend. For Lenman (2003, sections 5 and 6), the strength to act according to the recommendations of the ideal advisor is best left to complement the agent's own, first-order strength of desire to act according to the judgement in question, together accounting for the weakness of the will, that we are all guilty of. While the difference between Lenman's and Ridge's versions seems small, those differences have significant consequence. Those will be made clear in the next section, where the problems both versions have will be investigated.

4.3 Problems with Hybrid Expressivist Account

Krister Bykvist and Jonas Olson (2009) have published a critique of Ridge's account and listed some key points for expressivists to answer. Bykvist and Olson agree with Ridge that expressivism has the most problems with taking care of certitude, as the other two features seem to be readily explained even by pure expressivism. There are two main problems that Bykvist and Olson direct to both Ridge's and Lenman's account of certitude. The first problem is the normalisation of certitude, that also ties into the cross-attitudinal comparison of moral judgements and descriptive beliefs. This normalisation

problem is a problem for pure expressivism as well, not just for hybrid expressivism and concerns both Ridge's and Lenman's versions. The second problem is aimed directly at Ridge's account of certitude and concerns the issue of how the strength of the desire-like attitude should be understood.

The first problem Bykvist and Olson identify is the normalisation problem. As already discussed earlier when explaining Smith's challenge, certitude in different beliefs is commonly normalised as a number between 0 and 1 in order to enable comparisons between different beliefs. In the normalisation of certitude, 0 is represented by a total lack of confidence and 1 as complete certainty. Now the problem that Bykvist and Olson point out for traditional form of expressivism is that desire does not seem to have a natural maximum. 0 can be represented by total indifference, but "maximum desire" does not seem to spell out anything intelligible (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 212). Normalisation is problematic is there is no natural maximum.

Normalising the certitude of a belief between 0 and 1 also enables it to be tracked by the betting behaviour of a subject, which is a crucial point in Smith's explanation of certitude. If moral certitude cannot be normalised between 0 and 1, but should be understood to be between 0 and ∞, betting behaviour cannot track it, and it poses problems with comparing certitude of a moral belief with that of a descriptive belief. In that case, the scale is different for the descriptive beliefs and moral judgments, making comparisons meaningless. Bykvist and Olson think this is important because, on their view, cross-attitudinal comparisons should be possible. As an example, they write that subject S can be more confident of "2+2=4" than "utilitarianism is true" (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 212). They also point out that without a scale to measure the confidence one has in the different propositions, it seems puzzling how to compare the certitude of a descriptive belief and a desire-like state of mind (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 212). A common scale is needed, they argue.

In a later paper Bykvist and Olson slightly pivot to argue that even solving the normalisation issue and coming up with a common scale does not solve the cross-attitudinal problem (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 5). The argument is not a strong one, as it

rests on intuitions and non-examined assumptions. Bykvist and Olson propose that beliefs and motivational non-cognitive attitudes are so different, that comparing the strength of the two seems too complicated and that cognitivist will not have the same problem as they only use beliefs (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 5). However, it is not entirely clear that cognitivists can explain comparing moral and non-moral certitudes or, if one does not use logical truths which clearly merit certitude of 1 as Bykvist and Olson use, they even should be comparable. In fact, it could be argued that as Bykvist and Olson's examples all use simple logical or mathematical truths, they fail to give a good general argument that certitude of all beliefs (moral or not) should be possible to be compared with each other. Consider for example the non-moral belief "it will rain tomorrow in Helsinki" and moral belief "helping people in need, regardless of their previous actions, is the right thing to do". It might seem like a potential for fieldwork studies, investigating if people do see comparing their certitude of these type of questions intuitive. Until better argument then just stating intuitions is provided, it seems safe to assume that solving normalisation problem would also enable cross-attitudinal comparison, as then both moral and non-moral beliefs will get a number on a comparable scale. Even if the comparison between those two beliefs is not intuitive, it can be made.

The problem of normalisation is most clearly a problem for a pure expressivist. It also turns out that both Ridge and Lenman, despite going hybrid, will have to deal with the issues identified, albeit in a critically different ways. For Ridge, the problem is similar to the one a pure expressivist faces, even though he included a descriptive belief in his account. Ridge described certitude as consisting of both belief and desire-like components strengths. When adding the strength of the non-cognitive, desire-like component to the mix of certitude Ridge seems to lose the account of what it means for the certitude to be 1, thus making the comparison of cross-attitudinal states unclear (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 212). Adding a desire-like state of mind to the mix loses the simple meaning of full certitude.

If the desire-like attitude seems to cause the problems, then would it be possible to drop it and explain certitude with only the belief part of the hybrid account? This route is the one Lenman takes. According to Lenman, the certitude of a moral judgement is simply the certitude of the belief that the subject's ideal advisor would endorse the judgement

(Lenman 2003). Bykvist and Olson, however, point out that that is purely certitude of a descriptive belief and does not catch any moral certainty (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 210). As the description of an ideal agent is necessarily a descriptive one, we could have a situation where we are uncertain of which ideal advisor to follow. In other words, the question remains that is anything that a particular ideal advisor endorses actually good. This uncertainty is not captured by just having uncertainty on whether an ideal agent would endorse something. It seems that expressivists definition of certitude must involve the desire-like component as well to correctly capture moral certainty, with all the problems explained above.

The second problem that Bykvist and Olson discuss is directed only to Ridge's account. Remember that Ridge's account of certitude consisted of the strength of a subject's belief that an ideal advisor would recommend the judgement and from the strength of her pro-attitude for that advisor's recommendations. According to Ridge, this desire-like pro-attitude is relative to the subject's other desires, in order to account for motivational maladies. If an agent suffers depression and all her desires weaken, it should not lower her degree of confidence for moral judgements. Even though depression will affect the motivation to act according to the judgement, it does not make her less sure that it is true. Thus, the strength of the endorsement is always relative to her other desires (Ridge 2007, 72). In other words: if the strength of the desire is normalised as a number, it will stay the same if all the agent's desires are weakened by the same degree. Unfortunately, Bykvist and Olson show that this method of normalisation leads to severe problems. If the desire-like pro-attitudes strength is measured relative to other desires, then it follows that if the strength of another desire increases and the agent's strength in desiring actions her ideal advisor would recommend remains the same, her certitude in moral judgements decreases (Bykvist & Olson 2009, 214). In practice this effect would mean, for example, that if the agent's desire for an ice cream cone increases, her moral certitude will decrease. This is manifestly an absurd outcome.

To summarise the critique made by Bykvist and Olson is that hybrid expressivism faces a dilemma. On the one hand, if certitude is accounted only by the belief component of the moral judgement, then it cannot capture moral uncertainty, only empirical uncertainty. On the other hand, including the desire-like component as part of the certitude equation

faces the problem that either motivational maladies, like depression, will decrease an agent's moral certitude or that the agent's moral certitude can change depending on changes on her other desires. In addition to these problems, Bykvist and Olson demand more explanation of how the cross-attitudinal comparison can make sense if moral judgements and descriptive beliefs are different kinds of attitudes and the normalisation of them uses different scales. Just modifying Smith's proposal to an expressivist-friendly format does not work, so in the next section we will look for different ways to understand credences of moral judgements.

4.4 Structuring Pure Expressivism

Based on the criticism encountered in the last section, Andrew Sepielli (2011) suggested that hybrid expressivists are in the same boat as pure expressivists: both have similar troubles in explaining credences. Going hybrid did not give any benefits, so it seems that focusing only on the explanation pure expressivism should give could be beneficial. Sepielli argues that any form of expressivism that has enough structure to solve the infamous Frege-Geach problem will solve Smith's challenge as well (Sepielli 2011, 191). In this section will be briefly explained Sepielli's view, before moving on to the inevitable counterarguments it has encountered from Bykvist and Olson.

Sepielli takes the Frege-Geach problem to be primarily a question of the complexity of semantics: while moral language is very complex, non-cognitivist rendering of moral thought is not (Sepielli 2011, 196). Now the problem is trying to explain the first with the second; reducing the complexities of language to non-cognitive states is facing severe problems. One of the best examples of this is the Unwin's (1999) question of negation. Cognitivist can explain the inconsistency of "x is good" and "x is not good" by relying on the meaning of the concept of "not" and the logical relation of the beliefs expressed by the sentences. Expressivists cannot appeal to the logical relation of beliefs, as she holds that they are not beliefs (or at least not the same kind of beliefs). If she instead states that there exists non-cognitive state of "favouring" that takes place instead of a belief, she could say that "x is right" expresses the attitude of "favouring x" and "x is not right" expresses the attitude of "favouring not x" (Sepielli 2011, 197). However, as Unwin

(1999) explained, this is not good enough. There exist two different negations of the sentence “x is right”: “x is not right” and “not x is right”. The attitude of “favouring not x” seems to correlate to the latter, not on the previous as it should be. Critically it seems like the sentences “x is right” and “not x is right” might not be inconsistent, at least if the word “right” is replaced or equated with “permitted” (Sepielli 2011, 197).

While Sepielli highlights different possible options to reply to this challenge, he ultimately picks the one that Mark Schroeder has drafted in his book “Being For” (2008). In the book Schroeder argues for adding complexity to the non-cognitive state expressed by moral thought. Instead of having an attitude towards something, we have an attitude towards having some relation to that thing (Sepielli 2011, 198). An example will help explain the concept. In simpler expressivism, “murder is wrong” expresses a non-cognitive attitude against murder, like blaming or not-favouring. Now this more complicated version asserts a non-cognitive attitude of “being for” so that in the previous example “wrong” corresponds to being for “blaming for murder” (Schroeder 2008, 56). In this way the moral judgement “murder is wrong” expresses FOR(blaming for murder), “murder is not wrong” expresses FOR(not blaming for murder) and “not murdering is wrong” expresses FOR(not murdering). Adding complexity in this way will cleanly solve the problem Unwin highlighted as well as contribute to the solving of the Frege-Geach problem.

Giving the expressivist’s moral judgement more structure enables answering Smith's challenge as well, or so Sepielli argues. He suggests that degrees of Being For (as explained by Schroeder) are comparable to degrees of belief of cognitive beliefs (Sepielli 2011, 199). Certitude is about the "outer-structure", and the importance can be assigned in the "inner-structure" of the judgement: being very sure that murder is very wrong would be "being very FOR(strongly blaming murder)". Why in this order? It is because the "inner-structure" must encompass the gradable feature of moral judgement. "It is better to lie to avoid causing anxiety than to always speak the truth" is to grade "lying for a good cause" more important than "speak truth" and the corresponding non-cognitive state would be "being FOR(preferring "lying for a good cause" to "always speaking truth")". The main idea Sepielli is promoting here is that the Frege-Geach problem is

about accommodating two different content in the expressivist picture of moral judgement: beliefs and logical concepts. Now the suggestion is that any expressivist view that can solve the Frege-Geach problem should be able to use the same resources to solve Smiths challenge.

Recall from the last section that the problem of normalisation was one of the critical issues plaguing expressivist accounts using non-cognitive attitude to explain degrees of belief. Normalisation of credences was mainly needed for cross-attitudinal comparison as well as accommodating some intuitive, logical behaviour of credences. As Bykvist and Olson identified, the main problem for normalisation of non-cognitive states of minds seems to be about finding the maximum, i.e. what correlates with the degree of 1 (Bykvist&Olson 2008, 212). Sepielli (2011, 203) proposes to normalise the Being For with the following account:

NORMALISED BEING FOR: For(X) = 1, where X is a universal set whose members are all possible relations an agent might bear to an action.

The above formulation declares that if an agent is For something, the maximum amount she can be is 1. Sepielli points out that the issue is more about whether we take this non-cognitive states to be normalised, not if it actually is normalised in a strictly metaphysical sense (Sepielli 2011, 203). In other words, Sepielli is not giving out an explanation of what does it mean to be for something to the degree of 1, but is saying that just by "fixing" the maximum at 1 and making credences obey the laws of probability theory, we can explain how surface-level moral language and our intuitions work.

4.5 Problems of The Being For Account

As with the other attempts, Krister Bykvist and Jonas Olson have published a set of criticism showing where Sepielli's work falls short. Sepielli claimed that as hybrid versions of expressivism do not gain any benefits compared to a version of expressivism using only non-cognitive state of mind. As such, he focused on explaining certitude from a pure expressivists point of view. Unfortunately for him, Bykvist and Olson show that

the problems they showed plaguing a hybrid version are still present in Sepielli's account, with the addition of some new issues.

When recounting Ridge's version of certitude, we found out that if the certitude of a moral judgement is tied to a non-cognitive state of mind, then motivational maladies will be a problem. Being in a state of depression lowers an agent's motivational attitudes. Sepielli explicitly poses Being For to be inherently motivating, and so it falls prey to motivational maladies (Sepielli 2011, 200). The problem is that if having a high certitude that "x is good" is represented as "being very FOR(x)", the certitude in that moral judgement is lowered if you are depressed. As earlier, this seems wrong, or at least it is not clear why this would happen. Having depression does not reduce an agent's certitude that "2+2=4", so the gut reaction is that it should not lower our certitude that "x is good" either (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 4). No progress is made here by Sepielli.

What about the cross-attitudinal comparison, which Bykvist and Olson previously identified as a major problem? After all, Sepielli offers an answer to the normalisation. His idea rests on solving the issue of what does it mean for desire-like attitude to be at its maximum level. As explained in the last section, the idea is to declare that the maximum level of Being For is reached when considering all the possible relations an agent could have with some proposition. This simply fixes the maximum level theoretically to enable normalisation. Bykvist and Olson argue this theoretical fixing creates an awkward problem.

The problem rests on the notion that according to Sepielli's explanation, the tautological judgement "blaming for A or not blaming for A" must have credence to the degree of 1 (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 6). Now as non-cognitivists hold that moral judgements are action-guiding and inherently motivating, the question is that what is an agent motivated to do when she judges "blame A or not blame A"? It would seem that she would be for a tautological act, which seems somewhat odd. As Bykvist and Olson point out, being for a tautological act would mean that she would be guided to either disregard the whole issue of A or not be motivated to do anything (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 6). After all, what could you do that would be based on a tautology? This is an unfortunate result, especially when if she seems to be less than fully certain about "blaming for A". If she is firmly, but less

than fully, FOR(blaming for A) it means that she is more FOR(blaming for A or not blaming for A). Being most for a tautology would implicate that she is either motivated to disregard A or do nothing. This is absurd, as now the agent should be less motivated for doing acts according to "blaming for A" than doing nothing, while still being firmly for blaming for A. Another way Bykvist and Olson illustrate the worry is by referencing preferences. A preference logic principle says that if A is weakly preferred to not-A, then A is weakly preferred to (A or not-A), which is in turn weakly preferred to not-A (Bykvist & Olson 2012, 7). In other words, the worry is that it seems like moral judgements have no motivational force, and that is exceptionally bad for non-cognitivists.

Sepielli's account aims to explain how pure expressivism can have enough structure for both certitude and importance, but it does not succeed in its goals. The same problems that Bykvist and Olson identified earlier still exist. If explaining certitude as a feature of the non-cognitive state-of-mind seems to be difficult, could expressivists try to take the matter out of the moral judgement itself and explain the issue as something else? Next section will introduce an attempt to do just that.

4.6 Classificatory Account of Certitude

As we saw, Sepielli did not manage to solve the problems that are due to the credence being described as a feature of a non-cognitive state-of-mind. John Eriksson and Ragnar Francén Olinder think these are valid problems and thus they try something else. They take the road Jimmy Lenman took and try to account for certitude fully in terms of a cognitive belief. In contrast to Lenman, they argue that their account can be used by pure expressivists as well, not just hybrid expressivists. The main idea is that the uncertainty of a moral belief should be linked to the psychology behind uncertainty and how that necessarily introduces a belief component to the equation (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 719).

So what is the psychology behind uncertainty? To explore that question, Eriksson and Francén Olinder make a foray into what they call classificatory uncertainty. We all have dispositions to group things together in our mind, for example labelling various furniture items as chairs. After the class of chair has been established, we can start applying it to

the objects we see around us. However, we might also be uncertain whether some item actually is a chair, even if we know all the characteristics of the item in question. As Eriksson and Francén Olinder explain, we might be uncertain if the back of the chair is big enough to be classified as a chair instead of a stool, even if we are aware of all the actual measurements (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 725). According to Eriksson and Francén Olinder, this is being fundamentally chair-uncertain, and they argue that purely moral uncertainty is analogous to classificatory uncertainty (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 725).

Eriksson and Francén Olinder explain that there are, in fact, more than one way one can be morally uncertain. Two fundamental types identified are:

(1) Uncertainty what the standard in question says about the situation, or indeterminacy of the standard.
(2) Uncertainty about the content of the standard itself.

The first type of uncertainty can be easily highlighted with the case of "is the Pope a bachelor?". In this case you might have indeterminate standards of what counts as a bachelor, and thus you face the uncertainty of whether to count the Pope as a bachelor or not. This indeterminacy can also result in faster and slower cases of deciding whether something is falls under a classification. In the previous case you might, in the end, classify the Pope as a bachelor, but it is not as immediate and clear as classifying a regular, non-clerical unmarried man as a bachelor. In other words, there are degrees of centrality to the standard. (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 725-726).

Eriksson and Francén Olinder say that our moral standards are opaque. While we do have the matching disposition to apply them to the world, we very often are not able to give a full analysis of the concept in question. We are also fallible beings, so we might, for example, be under the influence of distorting facts or be guilty of wishful thinking. This is the second type of uncertainty. The uncertainty about a moral belief can be a doubt that the belief in question has been thought out in all possible scenarios and that it would be found true in all those scenarios, or that it can be uncertainty about our own mental

capabilities and dispositions when making the judgement. (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 726-727).

The second type of uncertainty looks like the uncertainty of descriptive type, rather than uncertainty of moral matters. Eriksson and Francén Olinder, however, argue that the comparison of moral and descriptive uncertainty is a false dichotomy, and rather we should investigate derived and non-derived moral uncertainty (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 728). The derived uncertainty is where we are uncertain if an act has the properties that we label as wrong-making, and the underived uncertainty deals with the question of whether those properties correctly label an act as wrong, according to our standards (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 728).

Now the one thing that is glaringly missing from the two uncertainties is the case where the agent is uncertain of whether her *classifications* are correct. Wondering about the classifications themselves is not similar to the uncertainties discussed above, as she is not actually uncertain about whether the standard applies here, or whether the specific standard has been appropriately investigated. Instead she is questioning if she even can make true judgements. She is fundamentally uncertain about her general ability to get any standards right. Here Eriksson and Francén Olinder make a novel suggestion. To doubt her standards means that the agent has a belief that her moral beliefs misrepresent the world (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 730). She is, in effect, projecting moral standards to the world and acts as if there are objective moral properties which her moral standards should reflect. Thus, doubting a moral standard is to be worried that that standard is not correctly representing the world, and we can see that standard in the world only because we are projecting them as features of the real world. This means that to doubt that a moral standard does not correctly represent the world is to have a false belief that it even *can* represent the world in any way (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 730). To be uncertain about moral standards is relevantly different from being uncertain whether the standard applies to this situation or whether the standard applies in all cases.

To recap, according to Eriksson and Francén Olinder uncertainty of a belief is akin to classificatory uncertainty, except in the case where the subject believes that her moral belief might misrepresent the world. In all other cases, the uncertainty boils down to either

being uncertain that the moral standard in question applies to the situation or uncertainty about how determined the standard is. This reduction enables Eriksson and Francén Olinder to disattach uncertainty from the moral belief itself: uncertainty is not a feature of the moral belief, but a feature of the necessarily accompanying descriptive belief (Eriksson & Francén Olinder 2016, 731-732). With this separation, Eriksson and Francén Olinder disagree with Michael Smith's thought of what credences are, which is the basis of his original argument dealt with in the section 4.1.

4.7 Problems with the Classificatory Account of Certitude

Eriksson and Francén Olinder use the Lenman route of argumentation, by relying on a descriptive belief to provide the certitude of moral judgements. If we now recall the principal objection that Bykvist and Olson used against Lenman, it comes clear that Eriksson and Francén Olinder have not yet fully solved the problem. The problem with relying on a descriptive belief (that accompanies a moral judgment) to provide the certitude is that the uncertainty is then about that descriptive belief, not about moral matters. The classificatory account of uncertainty seems to focus on whether the object of the moral judgement has a property, or qualifies as having a property, which an agent's moral standard ascribes to it. As Bykvist and Olson note, this does not give a general account of uncertainty, as the agent can be certain that the object of her judgement has the property her standard ascribes as either right-making or wrong-making, and still be uncertain whether the standard itself is correct (Bykvist & Olson 2017, 729)

As explained, to account for the uncertainty of an agent about whether her own moral beliefs are correct, Eriksson and Francén Olinder have the novel idea that in this case, she has a (false) belief about her moral beliefs. The idea is a novel one as it explains that doubting all of your own moral beliefs is actually a separate belief, not even necessarily defined as a feature of the moral belief. It is also striking how similar this is to the proposal made by Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, explained in section 3.4. While Horgan and Timmons claimed that admitting that your stable moral judgements could be wrong is actually stating a metaethical opinion about realist-type moral facts, Eriksson and Francén Olinder just straight out answer that even if you state this type of opinion, it is a false belief. Not surprisingly, this answer comes with problems.

Bykvist and Olson also note that this belief is a metaethical belief, which, according to non-cognitivism, is a false one (Bykvist & Olson 2017, 730). Bykvist and Olson point out that it is certainly possible to make moral judgements without thinking metaethical questions of whether our judgements are beliefs and whether those correctly represent the objective moral facts (Bykvist & Olson 2017, 4). The projectivist belief is not necessarily accompanying the moral judgment, and so they conclude that requiring a metaethical belief cannot be the correct answer.

While that above is undoubtedly true, it is not such a big deal. Having doubts about your moral beliefs is also something which does not necessarily accompany those beliefs. Those doubts, or certainty if that is the case, can arguably only materialise once you think about it. If that is the case, then it might be that the metaethical belief, which Eriksson and Francén Olinder argued for, is actually formed at the very moment the certitude of a moral belief is thought about. The bigger problem seems to be facing non-cognitivists themselves. If you are a committed non-cognitivist and realise that doubting your own moral beliefs means having a false belief, you should drop that belief (Bykvist & Olson 2017, 730). In that case you will be dropping any and all quasi-realist inclinations, as you then must abandon any possibility to doubt your moral beliefs in all but descriptive sense.

Even if this can be remedied, all is not solved. As with Horgan and Timmons, it is not entirely clear that the question can be transferred to the realm of metaethics. The main problem still seems to be that a belief about moral beliefs does not really answer how those moral beliefs have credences (Bykvist & Olson 2017, 730). Even while the (descriptive) belief about our own moral judgements does have a credence, how should that apply to the moral belief system, which is its subject? It is not clear how this should function. As with Horgan and Timmons earlier, moving the question to the realm of metaethics seems a potential way forward, but as it stands it does not have the explanatory power it claims. If not properly addressed, the classificatory account seems to apply only in the situations where the actual, fundamental moral belief is not questioned.

As the discussion so far shows, the problem of certitude as it has been formulated seems to be a serious one for all non-cognitivists, expressivists and quasi-realists included, and

has close linkage to the question of doubting our stable moral judgements. While the traditional epistemological account of belief deals in binaries, the idea that belief, in reality, comes in varying degrees seems common-sensical. As a common-sensical idea prevalent in common thought and speak, it is something that quasi-realists needs to be able to include in their analysis of moral belief. As Bykvist and Olson further clarified, moral beliefs should have a degree of belief in the same scale as descriptive beliefs, arguing that otherwise, the comparison between the two is difficult to make sense of (Bykvist & Olson 2008, 212).

This thesis started with exploring the problem Andy Egan set with pointing out that expressivist explanation of uncertainty seemed to encounter problems when the uncertainty is about a stable moral belief (Egan 2007). According to Egan's argumentation, it seems that expressivist would need to admit that there is an asymmetry between our stable beliefs and other people's stable beliefs. That is, we can doubt everyone else's stable beliefs, but not our own. This asymmetry, in turn, seems to run afoul of quasi-realists commitment to common moral thought. Michael Ridge identified that when dealing with uncertainty and with judgements of stability, understanding certitude plays a big part (Ridge 2015). Unfortunately, Ridge did not successfully solve the problem Egan proposed. The critical issue is still located in understanding what does a judgement of stability and uncertainty in a moral belief means. To determine whether we even should be able to doubt our stable judgements, we first need to understand what credences mean. Unfortunately for expressivists, Michael Smith showed that understanding how credences work in non-cognitivist explanation of moral judgment is difficult (Smith 2002). In answering all the attempts to provide answers to Smith's challenge, Bykvist and Olson have specified that one of the major problems seems to be explaining what full certitude means. If a desire-like component is part of the moral judgement, what does it mean to have a full certitude is not entirely clear. Desires do not, after all, seem to have a maximum natural level. Making sense of a belief, moral or non-moral, with full certitude seems to be paramount in understanding stable beliefs in Egan's challenge as well. Without being able to explain how certitude can be a part of the moral judgement so that it can be normalised, quasi-realists cannot adequately answer either of the challenges, Egan's or Smith's.

That is if you play by the rules that Smith set. The foundation of Smith's challenge is based on the understanding that certitude as is an integral part of the belief itself and cognitivists do not have any problems to explain certitude. Michael Ridge has recently argued (2018b), this supposition is highly problematic. Example Smith gave in explaining certitude relied on tracking betting behaviour of an individual, which seems to be the orthodox view on certitude. The whole idea of certitude as akin to betting behaviour heavily relies on, or at least leads into, a philosophical position of Bayesianism or probabilism, which will be explained in more detail in the next chapter.

5 DEGREES OF BELIEF

5.1 Bayesianism and the Dutch Book Argument

It is a borderline platitude that opinions and beliefs come in degrees. We only need to look into the profitable industry of sports betting to see it in action. Or more mundanely, one can initiate a discussion with anyone about tomorrows weather and whether it will rain or not. There exists a myriad of options between "it will definitely rain" and "it will definitely not rain". As seen from the discussion in the previous chapter, it is common to describe the degrees of belief as betting behaviour. This section explores why this is the case.

The current orthodoxy on degrees of belief, or credences, rely on either full Bayesianism or the reduced concept of probabilism. Instead of being a single idea and theory, Bayesianism is a collection of ideas and positions dealing with, for example, questions in confirmation theory and epistemology. While there is no unified Bayesian theory or position, there are some keystones that most Bayesians agree upon. Kenny Easwaran (2011a, 312) describes them thus:

(1) There is an important mental attitude of a degree of belief or credence that can (often) be given numerical values.
(2) For an agent to be perfectly rational, her degrees of belief must obey the axioms of probability theory.
(3) *Conditionalisation*, or some close relative, is the standard way beliefs change over time.

Point 3 is sometimes left out of the commitments, but then the view is simply called probabilism. For the problem outlined in the previous section, only points 1 and 2 need apply, so the term "probabilism" is used in this thesis. However, as Bayenianism incorporates probabilism in it, the terms can be used interchangeably in the discussion which follows. The first point, arguably the fundamental point in probabilism, is similar to what is described in the previous chapter when Smith's challenge to expressivism was discussed. Namely that even while a subject can have two (or more) beliefs

simultaneously, her confidence in them can be different and that the confidence on a single belief can be given a numerical value. As we recall, this seemed to be the key problem facing expressivists, as it is not clear if non-cognitive states of mind can be given numerical values similar to descriptive beliefs.

The second point making the boundaries on agent's rationality uses axioms of probability theorem but does not fix exactly which axioms. There exists some variation of which axioms should be used, but that does not matter to the present discussion. In short, the idea is to enable comparisons, additions, unions and similar logical operations between different degrees of belief. Now, one of the main arguments for the probabilism, called the Dutch book argument, illustrates this point the best. The Dutch book argument also contains a betting situation, but a more complex and more strictly defined than discussed in the previous chapter.

In the Dutch book it is assumed, that for every proposition, there exists a price which the subject is willing to pay for a bet that pays one euro (1€) if the proposition is true. Also, this price is considered fair by the subject, meaning that she is willing to buy the bet if offered a lower price and sell it if offered a more significant price. The Dutch book argument consists of a series of bets made against a bookie with one more major assumption made: the buying behaviour of the subject making the bets is not affected by any previous transactions. With these assumption made, it can be proven that if the prices the subject accepts do not follow axioms of probability theory, the subject is guaranteed a loss. In other words, in a series of bet transactions, if the subject makes decisions which break axioms of probability theory, she will lose money even if the decisions are otherwise rational at the point they were made. The proof is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is sufficient to say that it has been taken to show that only bets that satisfy the axioms of probability theorem are rational, as stated by the second point above. (f.e. Easwaran 2011a, 315.)

The Dutch book is obviously theoretical device not meant to be taken literally. Despite the theoretical background, it has been argued that if a subject would have a fair bet price in her mind and if this price would be determined solely by her degree of belief to that proposition, this price would give us numerical values to her degree of belief (Easwaran

2011a, 315). Explained like this, betting behaviour is close to what Smith described as certitude of a subject. If theoretical bets would give us singular numerical values for degrees of belief that would neatly guarantee easy device for comparing certitudes of different beliefs, even beliefs made at different times. For this reason, being able to track this type of betting behaviour would be a good goal for expressivists to pursue in order to solve one of the bigger problems pointed out by Bykvist and Olson. There are, however, many problems with the Dutch book argument and paralleling degrees of belief with betting behaviour, as highlighted by Lina Erikson and Alan Hájek (2007). These problems will be explained in the next section.

5.2 Credences as Betting Behaviour

As we saw in the last section, maybe the most significant argument for probabilism, the Dutch book argument, loosely linked degrees of belief with betting behaviour. It seems clear that there are two different ways to understand this linking. Either an agent's degree of belief in an outcome of a belief is *defined by* what she would bet (in a suitable betting situation) for that outcome, or the degree of belief is *measured by* how she would bet in that situation. There are problems with both approaches.

First and foremost, it is not viable for the actual, real-world betting behaviour to define degrees of belief. We do not always bet according to our beliefs. Consider for example a football team fan who bets according to his loyalties, or a puritan who refuses to bet altogether and thus would have a certitude of 0 for all beliefs (Erikson & Hájek 2007, 187). Erikson & Hájek (2007, 188) also raise a good point about actual betting situations not really obeying the basic closure conditions of probabilities: we do not bet on a disjunction or conjunction of different betting situations, like an outcome of a horse race and an outcome of a lottery.

For these reasons the betting situation is usually considered hypothetical and the betting subject idealised. Idealisation is, however, a tricky tool and seems a bit ad-hoc. There are worries that anything can be said with an "idealised" version of a situation and that idealisation loses the connection with the real world (Erikson & Hájek 2007, 189). Even if the worry about idealisation would be put aside, the betting interpretation also seems

to be circular. Betting on some proposition, like the outcome of a horse race, does not just depend on an agent's credences of the proposition "horse X will win". It also rests on her credences about other propositions: what the bets are, how the race is going to be conducted, what are its rules, is betting allowed by God, and similar beliefs (Erikson & Hájek 2007, 188). To say that a degree of belief is *defined* by betting behaviour is thus at least heavily suspect.

What about *measuring* degrees of beliefs by betting behaviour? Similar problems rise here as well. First of all, the same football fan and puritan examples suffice to illustrate that the measurement cannot be direct in this case either, but rather an idealisation. More importantly, placing bets changes the world and possibly credences as well (Erikson & Hájek 2007, 191-192). These changes are the key reason the Dutch book argument presupposes that previous or future bets do not affect future bets. Otherwise the subject would see the Dutch book coming and reject it, even while the individual bets would be acceptable. In the real world this assumption is problematic: an agent should be able to change her credences if the world changes (Erikson & Hájek 2007, 192). Moreover, there are instances where incoherent betting behaviour is the winning strategy, which clearly gives problems for probabilism (see f.e. Erikson & Hájek 2007, 193).

Regardless whether degrees of belief are defined by betting behaviour, or whether they should just be measured by it, stating that credence on a proposition should have a single numerical value has additional problems. First of all, demanding a single and specific value instead of a range of possibilities seems to run counter to our intuitions on some cases. As Jonathan Roorda argues, demanding commitment to a single value of fair odds to something like political election results seems unduly harsh (Roorda 1995, 15). For example, even if all the facts were known to me, and I would be an idealisation of myself as a fully informed, fully rational and without any possible failures of mind, I suppose I would allow myself to accept a variety of odds as fair if forced to bet on the number of seats any of the parties will win in the next Finnish general elections. If in a betting situation I must choose a single bet, the choice between several fair bet options might be random.

What's more, it seems like not all beliefs can be even tracked with betting behaviour. Namely, if I have an unprovable proposition on my hands constructing a betting situation seems exceedingly hard. As an example, I might be rather certain that no aliens will be discovered during my lifetime. However, I would be unwilling to bet anything on that as the proposition can only be discovered true or false after I have died, making the betting a moot point for me. Using only monetary rewards to find out betting odds is not going to work in these situations. These types of unprovable propositions, or at least beliefs in propositions where constructing a viable betting situation is hard, are crucial for the main interest in this thesis. After all, most philosophical theories seem to fall into this category. A betting situation to find out credences on the proposition "rule-consequentialism is the correct theory" seems to be rather hard to imagine. Creating a fair betting situation for philosophical propositions, which might not have unambiguously true or false outcomes, is a somewhat foolish task.

However, understanding betting as purely monetary or similar exchange might be too narrow. Instead of talking about financial benefits and actual betting situation, which has already been exposed as problematic, the betting situation can be understood as a broader concept. Frank Ramsey proposed in his 1926 article "Truth and Probability" that betting should be understood to be linked to the choices one makes in life. Every decision you make has an expected utility, which, together with your degree of belief, can be used to calculate the most rational choice from a myriad of options. If option A has a utility of 50 and you believe it to the degree of 0.8, and option B has a utility of 20 with a degree of belief being only 0.6, choosing option A would clearly maximise your expected utility. Ramsey used as an example a real-life situation of being in a crossroad. To measure the degree of belief I have in that one of the roads is the one I should take, one can measure the physical distance I would be willing to travel in order to find the correct answer (Ramsay 1926, 174). The betting situation can be interpreted in this way as a situation where an agent is willing to risk something she values on the truth of the proposition in the question, which would lead to a payoff of something else she values (see f.e. Ridge 2018b). The goal is to find the relative value of the payoff versus the risked value, and name that as the subjective probability.

Unfortunately, this does not solve the problems that have been discussed about singular values, or the problem of unprovable propositions. For example, taking the previous example of betting on the Finnish Parliamentary elections, it can be imagined that the agent can still accept a variety of subjective payoffs as fair, manifested in her behaviour on issues that have a connection to the election. The broader account of betting does not explain the problem away; moreover, it could even be seen as expanding the possible behaviours of an agent thus giving even more leeway into what subjective probabilities could be counted as fair by the agent in question.

As for the proposition where monetary betting situations and rules are hard to define, the broader account might succeed in explaining bets on philosophical theories. Depending on which theory you subscribe to, you can choose to act according to that belief. Acts in this sense can be understood as acting according to the certainty that some theory is correct, or at least defensible, like writing a master thesis that argues for that theory. In spite of vindicating philosophical theories, the "no aliens discovered" statement proves still to be problematic. The problem is to pinpoint what actions would actually be affected by that belief. If none, then the subjective probability would be left undiscovered or undefined, which is an unviable solution. Even if "no aliens discovered" statement would not affect my actions in the least, I should still be able to have a degree of belief on it.

It seems like betting behaviour and credences are irrevocably different. The betting behaviour might supervene on credence, but it is by no means an explanation of what credence actually is or even provide a useful measurement tool for what credence in some situation might be. At most, betting behaviour might indicate in some narrow and specific situations what the value of a credence is, but it offers no metaphysical explanation.

What the degree of belief actually is seems to be exceedingly hard to define. While there have been other attempts besides tracking it with betting behaviour, they are all highly contested (see f.e. Erikson & Hájek 2007). There is a variance of confidence levels between various beliefs, as we can readily see, but the additional Bayesian complication of those confidences following probability calculus is mostly used as it is so convenient and seems to solve so many theoretical burdens (see Erikson & Hájek 2007, 210-211 and Easwaran 2011a, 318-319). Despite that, just “being useful” is a long way from a knock-

down argument. As Erikson and Hájek note (2007, 210), we have a good common-sense understanding of the concept of certitude and so can provide a sentence describing what we actually do know about it:

COMMON-SENSE CERTITUDE: It is the thing that should obey the probability calculus (and thus provides an interpretation of it), that is often but not always measured by betting dispositions, that guides decision, that underpins relations of confirmation between evidence and hypotheses, that is often revealed in verbal reports, and so on. (Erikson and Hájek 2007, 210)

Just listing things in this way about certitude does not give us any real understanding of what it is, but does point us in the direction of what needs to be explained.

As discussed, the betting behaviour seems like a useful, if not sufficiently explanatory, non-binding measurement of betting behaviour in some cases, but does not explain the metaphysics of certitude. In other words, giving a story about betting behaviour does not explain what certitude *is*. In regard to Smith's challenge explained in section 4.1, it at least looks like certitude is not actually a simple structural component of belief. If this is so, and certitude is more akin to betting *dispositions* on some instances if not all, there does not inherently seem to be anything that realist can say that would pose trouble for quasi-realist. If realists are happy to go with an explanation which does not change how a belief should be understood and is an additional disposition to act in some situations in certain way, no quasi-realist should be demanded a more robust explanation.

Quasi-realist is not, in spite of the above conclusion, free to claim access to the same resources as a conventional realist to solve the problems identified by Andy Egan and Michael Smith. The trouble comes from the question of how belief and credence are connected. Indeed, Michael Ridge (2018b) states that it might be the most relevant question for quasi-realists to solve. The linkage is interesting as well when thinking about what a stable belief is: when are credences and beliefs separate and how do they interact; is certain credences needed for something to count as a belief; what is the linkage between full belief, certitude and knowledge? These should all help in making sense about the question of what stable beliefs are and what does doubt mean. For these reasons, the

literature on the problem of dual epistemology is investigated in the next section as well as Ridge's idea of what problems it might cause to quasi-realists.

5.3 Problem of Dual Epistemology

Besides the problem of explaining what degrees of belief actually is, there also exists another grave worry: how to make sense of the two epistemological models on the table. The traditional model deals in the questions of justification, knowledge and belief, where belief is understood as a binary notion of "you have it" or "you do not have it". The degrees of belief model casts doubt on that understanding, as it supposes that belief is a more complicated thing. As the binary terminology of belief has been the default of traditional epistemologists and as such as has been the main target on most, if not all, quasi-realist accounts, it bears a closer look. To understand the relationship between these two models is crucial for understanding how the stable beliefs in Andy Egan's problem are connected to understanding credences of moral beliefs.

As recounted in Ridge (2018b, 20-22) and Easwaran (2011b, 327-329), there are three different possibilities to explain away the tension between credences and traditional notion of belief. These are

(1) Belief is reduced to credence, i.e. belief does not exist as a separate state of mind.
(2) Belief and credence co-exist as different states of mind.
(3) Credences are part of the content of belief, and do not exist as a separate state of mind.

The first possibility is that belief is an informal concept approximating graded credences and can be fully reduced to credences. According to this view using "belief", and possibly "knowledge", should be ceased and only credences should be used when discussing epistemological matters. To disregard almost all of the current epistemological discussion would, however, need strong evidence and counterexamples which do not seem to exist. If nothing more, belief as a concept seems to have a useful role in our daily discussions, and it should be explained what we are doing when we say we believe something. So,

dismissing the whole concept outright does not seem to be the right way. In light of this, it is sometimes argued that belief should only be reserved for cases where the credence is 1, i.e. for situations where a proposition is fully believed to be true (Easwaran 2011b, 327). The standard problem for this type of reasoning is that we seem to have beliefs on whole range of propositions we are not fully certain of, especially if the betting interpretation is expected to hold true even approximately (Moss 2018, 57-58).

We should be able to believe in a proposition, even if we are not ready to bet everything we have on it being true. I would say that I do believe that my nearest supermarket has at least ten cartons of low-fat milk on its shelves, but I am not fully certain of this and would not bet absurd sums on it. It might be that I'm counting distances wrong and think of the wrong supermarket, or that it might temporarily be out of milk altogether. Still, it seems that I can sensibly say that I believe that "nearest supermarket has at least ten cartons of low-fat milk on its shelves". If not, then the common-sense account of belief is relevantly different from this technical term and separating the two could use some extra justification.

To account that there are more beliefs than just fully certain ones, a so-called Lockean thesis understands beliefs to have credence above some threshold t (Easwaran 2011b, 328). For example, if the threshold is considered to be 0.9 and I have a credence of 0.98 on a proposition "a new Swallow the Sun album will be released next year", I will be counted as believing that album release timeline. Same goes with the milk example: I might not have credence of 1 on it, but I would still have high enough to be counted as believing it. The Lockean thesis seems a tempting way to combine credences and beliefs, but there are many problems associated with this type of thinking. While the seemingly arbitrary threshold could be a potential research project for some aspiring social scientist (what odds would people give to propositions they declare believing), there is a problem with it, called the lottery paradox. Given sufficiently many tickets on the lottery (specifically 1/(1-t) tickets on a lottery where a win is guaranteed, where t is the threshold of belief) you should believe that "this ticket is not the winning one" of all the tickets on play, while simultaneously believing that "one ticket is the winning one" (Easwaran 2011b, 328). Inconsistency like this does not look good on the account. While it looks right to be extremely uncertain on the winning possibilities on any single ticket, thus

creating an incentive not to buy lottery tickets, it must be simultaneously acknowledged that one ticket must be the winning one.

For these reasons, the Lockean threshold has been given other understandings and, for example, proposed to be context dependent. There are problems for these explanations as well. Notably, as Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder (2014) have argued, treating everything as a computational system where all the relevant non-zero credence outcomes of an action need to be considered in order to calculate the expected utility of the action, and thus to determine the particular credences of a proposition and whether we believe it, seems like a stretch. It might be the idealisation of how we should think, but it is not a realistic description of our thought processes. Thus, Ross and Schroeder argue that belief is actually a heuristical commitment to treat propositions as true in our actions and thoughts, not a cognitive computation treating it merely as highly likely outcome (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 266). Ross and Schoeder (2014) point out other problems as well for the Lockean position, such as that we can be wrong on our beliefs, and that reducing a belief to credence less than 1 means that we can always deny that we were wrong in our belief. Instead, we can say that we just thought it very probable, and thus were not wrong per se. This outcome does not look right, and so it practically undermines any theory which reduces belief to a mere probability calculus. (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 275.)

Ross and Schroeder are effectively arguing for the second possibility of how beliefs and credences are linked: the duality of state of minds in play. On the one hand, we have credences which follow probabilistic calculus and manifest themselves in actions taken when taking agents preferences in count as well; on the other hand, we have a heuristic commitment on the truth of a proposition, known as outright belief (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 286). Neither is reducible to the other, and both serve distinctly different purposes. Credences are as discussed by probabilist, but belief is treating the proposition as true in reasoning (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 264). In action, this hinges on the realisation that any action has potentially almost infinite number of possible outcomes, which we might not be able to dismiss. In order to do anything, an agent disregards most of the outcomes, picks one, and treats that as true in her subsequent reasoning (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 265).

According to Ross and Schoeder the agent is not required to treat something as true, thus differing significantly from all the Lockean theories discussed earlier. While she might act according to one of the possibilities, she might not treat it as true in her reasoning. To use a previous example, if I really would need several cartons of low-fat milk as soon as possible, I could go visit my nearest supermarket while simultaneously looking from the Google Maps where the next nearest supermarket is, just in case the supermarket really would not have low-fat milk. In this case, I would treat the proposition "nearest supermarket has at least ten cartons of low-fat milk on its shelves" as probable, but not true, and would not be counted as believing it.

The third option to consider about the linkage between credences and belief is the opposite of the first one. So instead of reducing belief to credences and effectually stating that credence is the more fundamental state of mind, there is the possibility to deny that credences are separate from belief. As with the opposite account, just dismissing the other term is not that attractive option, as we do seem to have varying degrees of confidence in different propositions. Sarah Moss (2018) has recently argued that credences are not a structural part of a belief, but part of the content. While Moss's main argument is that we can have probabilistic knowledge, i.e. knowledge on propositions like "the supermarket is probably on the left", she also argues that belief is the only attitude or state of mind and credences should be understood as probabilistic content of beliefs (Moss 2018, 57). A new way of understanding credences is naturally interesting for the questions explored in this thesis. The idea is that the sentence "the supermarket is probably on the left" has as its content a set of probability spaces, which assign higher credence to the proposition "the supermarket is on the left" than on the proposition "the supermarket is not on the left". Probability space is understood as a technical term, not used explicitly in thought or even consciously understood by agents making probabilistic judgements. To simplify Moss's theory rather heavily, it can be understood to say that the proposition "I have 0.2 credence on X" should be interpreted as a belief "X is 0.2 likely", cutting credences out of the picture as separate things to be accounted for.

While probabilistic content of a belief seems to suit utterances with words like "probably", "maybe", "certainly" and such, what about simple sentences without modal

content like “it is going to rain tomorrow”? These sentences still bear logical relations to sentences that do contain probabilistic wordings (Moss 2018, 54). For example, “it is going to rain tomorrow” is consistent with “it is probably going to rain tomorrow”, but not with “it is probably not going to rain tomorrow”. To account for this relation, Moss defines a simple sentence as a sentence that has as its content the set of probability spaces according to which the propositional content is certain (Moss 2018, 54).

This move, however, is not enough. If we can utter a simple sentence only when we are entirely certain of its content, we would be using simple sentences a lot less than we in fact do. Moss recognises this and introduces the idea that there are two types of speech: loose and strict (Moss 2018, 59). Strict speech fixes the content of an assertion so that uttering “it is three o’clock” in a strict sense really means precisely three o’clock, not a minute more or less. Loose speech of the same assertion, however, can be understood to be compatible with various times close enough to three o’clock. Moss claims that the same concept applies to belief so that we have both strict and loose beliefs about propositions. In effect, this would mean that simple strict belief is something we are fully certain of, and simple loose beliefs are analogous of having content with probability spaces which are not fully certain. In both cases, we still treat the simple belief as “close enough” to be certain for all practical purposes.

In this way, Moss’s idea is close to Ross’s and Schroeder's suggestion of treating a proposition as true in reasoning even if it is not certain. Both recognise the problem of equating (full) belief with full certainty in our practical lives and propose that in real life we have “practical” beliefs on less-than-certain propositions, which we still treat as certain in our actions. For Ross and Schroeder, those are there to guide our actions while Moss concentrates on their less-precise nature, but the end result is the same. Uttering a simple sentence with loose content is expressing a belief, which guides our actions but can be questioned.

In summary, of the three options of how probabilistic understanding of belief and the traditional binary epistemology are connected, it seems like only two options are viable. Reducing beliefs to certitude has serious problems, which both Ross and Schroeder’s and

Moss's managed to divert. Michael Ridge claims that this is critically important for quasi-realist. Ridge suggests, rather heavily, that quasi-realism just is a theory about what binary moral belief is (Ridge 2018b, 21). To conclude this, he draws especially from Allan Gibbard's theory, which discusses moral judgements as plans to settle what to do, as well as his own theory using normative perspectives, which also settles things to do. Ridge compares them with Ross and Schroeder's idea of treating propositions as true and concludes that this is a fully expressivist-friendly way of thinking (Ridge 2018b, 21). In contrast, dismissing binary belief altogether would get quasi-realist in trouble. This is because credences are not fundamental building blocks in quasi-realist theories in the same way that beliefs are. Ridge sees it crucial that the conclusions of this section are held up, namely that either dualism or belief-only monism is true (Ridge 2018b, 21-22).

Ridge does not offer much analysis of existing quasi-realist theories to support his conclusion, and indeed, the conclusion seems to be rather quick. While it is true that existing quasi-realist theories have focused on explaining binary belief in moral matters as expressions of state-of-minds distinct from representational beliefs and more akin to desires, focusing on the vocabulary of traditional epistemology does not, however, necessarily mean that quasi-realism cannot be squared with credence-only monism like the Lockean threshold theory. Indeed, even the Lockean theory makes use of the word "belief" in describing how we act, which should then be explained. Quasi-realism can, and should be able to, explain how these above-certitude-threshold states of mind guide our actions. Possibly the explanation relies on contingent plans on the things the certitude judgement rests, or some other similar theory, which takes into account the less-than-full confidence on the proposition on the table.

Either way, considering the arguments in this section, the situation looks promising for quasi-realists. Treating credences as part of the content of belief, or as a separate thing from belief should enable expressivists and quasi-realists to use whatever explanation realists would like to use to account for certitude. The question still remains that if credences are not understood as part of the content of belief, as in Moss's theory, what are they? One possible explanation is considered in the next section.

5.4 Functionalist Explanation of Belief and Credences

As we saw in the last two sections, certitude defies neat explanations of what it actually is. In many cases, the best we can do is to propose how to theoretically track it, but not define it. While the betting disposition combined with the presupposition of agent maximising her expected utility might predict the behaviour, it does not yet explain what credences are. At least if not understood as part of the content of the belief. If we presuppose credence to be a separate entity from belief although linked to it, we should first to ask what belief is. While there are multiple explanations on the metaphysics of mental states like belief, the one explored here is functionalism. Functionalism has arguably been one of the dominant ones (see f.e. Levin 2018, section 6), and furthermore, it could be said to be most in line with the quasi-realist program. In fact, Simon Blackburn has even gone to suggest that quasi-realism would be better called "non-representational functionalism" (Blackburn 1998, 177). In light of these facts, it is relevant to flesh out what functionalism says about belief in general and credence in particular.

What is functionalism? Functionalism is a theory about states of mind, which says that belief is defined by its functional property. Specifically, it would be the three different factors or roles it has on the cognitive system: the way it is generated, the way it interacts with other cognitive states and the way it affects behaviour (Blackburn 1998, 56). The functional understanding of belief is thus stating (extreme simplified) that a belief " it is raining outside" can be caused by sensory stimuli in the eye, has a relation to the desire not to get wet, and can produce the action of taking an umbrella with you when going out. The functional explanation did not reference any particular neural states or internal structure of the belief and is indeed commonly thought to be multiply realisable in that regard (Levin 2018, section 1). What functionalism offers is an explanation of a state of mind without any reference on the biological or physical happenings on the brain, and does not identify states of mind, like a belief, to a specific neural state. In other words, it is not a reduction to the biological reality.

There can be at least two possible accounts on how a functionalist can explains credences. One possibility is for credence on a particular proposition to be understood as a separate state of mind from belief. In this case it would have its own functionalist explanation. A

credence of "it will rain tomorrow" is the relevant state that fills out the needed (multiply realizable) function. Namely that it satisfies the conditions laid out earlier in section 5.2:

COMMON-SENSE CERTITUDE: It is the thing that should obey the probability calculus (and thus provides an interpretation of it), that is often but not always measured by betting dispositions, that guides decision, that underpins relations of confirmation between evidence and hypotheses, that is often revealed in verbal reports, and so on.

As Ridge states, this type of account is fully compatible with quasi-realism (Ridge 2018, 14). Whatever a realist wants to say about credences should be usable for quasi-realists as well, or at least there is not any apparent reason why they could not do so. Even better, as credences represent internal thinking and are subjective, it can be feasible asserted that they are expressed in the ordinary discourse much like expressivists say moral beliefs are expressed. We can thus be easily expressivists on credences. This amounts to claiming that credences are significantly different from representational beliefs, but suitably similar to moral belief and so capable of expressivistic treatment.

The other option to explain credences is to understand them as part of a belief. If credence is not a separate state of mind, but rather a part of a belief, it should also be part of the functionalist account of belief. Namely, one of the functions of a belief is then to account for degrees. If so, it should be complementary to the other two functional conditions: how belief interacts with other cognitive states and how it affects behaviour. Just based on COMMON SENSE CERTITUDE, a certitude of a belief can change other beliefs, can be a factor of whether a belief is formed, and most certainly contributes to actions taken based on that belief.

Interpreting credences as a functional requirement of a belief is in line with the original setup of Smith's challenge explained in section 4.1: it is not something different from the belief itself but forms an integral part of the belief. Connecting credences to both interactions with other cognitive states allows variations on how a belief affects other cognitive states like desires and other beliefs. A belief with a low credence might lessen the credence of another belief and thus result in a desire to find out more about either of those beliefs. The behavioural factor is obviously the most discussed one. The behaviour

effect is, in a way, the whole betting interpretation that was laid out in section 5.1; the amount of credence affects the way the agent behaves, as he is acting for maximising expected utility.

What about the potential problems if credences are understood in this way? If credence is part of the functional structure of belief, it means that a belief is necessary in order to have a credence on a proposition. That can be problematic. Just by reflection, it seems that we can assess the credibility of a proposition without having a belief on the proposition itself, so no belief is needed to have credences. Another problem would be to explain low credences. A belief with low credence does not seem to be what we understand a belief to be. To be counted as a belief, a certain amount of credibility seems to be required. As discussed in Ross and Schroeder (2014), belief is understood as a practical commitment to the truth of the proposition, which by definition needs more than low credence on the proposition. From this point of view the original question-setting by Smith is problematic. Credences should be understood as separate entities from belief.

In summary, functionalism explains belief as a state of mind by the functional properties it has. Considering the problems encountered by adding credence as one of the functional properties of belief, it looks like it is better suited to be a separate state-of-mind. In this way, Smith's original problem statement looks decisively faulty, as it seems to attach credence fully to the state-of-mind that is belief. If credences are understood as a separate state of mind from beliefs, whatever the details about the functional account ends up being, quasi-realists should be able to use the same account as the realist. Looking back how Simon Blackburn originally defined uncertainty, it was to be open to a possibility that when examining your belief from the viewpoint of your other judgements and beliefs it might be changed (Blackburn 1998, 318). If credences on our beliefs are different entities from beliefs themselves rather than a function or part of the content, then Blackburn's view could be a viable starting point for mapping the needed functionalist explanation of credence. Namely that credences are created by the examination of belief, they stand in relation to all the beliefs used in examining the one credence points at, and they affect behaviour in potentially changing the acts one does based on the belief examined. While this is just a crude start of an explanation, it shows that there is at the

very least a promising potential for quasi-realists to provide a viable functionalist explanation of credences.

6 WE ARE ALL SMUG

6.1 Stability and Credences Explained

As was proposed by Andy Egan and gone through in section 3.1, expressivists should be able to explain how they can doubt the moral beliefs they have, even those that they judge to be stable. It turned out that what a stable belief really is was not all that clear. It was suggested that stability should be understood to be linked to credence of a belief, and so understanding credences is critical to answer Egan's argument. Last two chapters investigated how credences are understood and what problems there are for expressivists in accounting them. It turned out that expressivists were not the only ones having problems with credences, as no consensus of how credences should be understood has been achieved. This result was significant in answering Michael Smith's challenge to expressivism. As told in section 4.1, Smith argued that expressivists cannot accommodate all three features of a moral belief, namely importance, stability, and credence. Smith's argument turned out to be too optimistic about realists' resources on the same issue.

Answering Smith, or at least defusing his problem, plays a key role in understanding how Egan's problem can be addressed. The key to answer Egan is to understand the relation between traditional epistemological dualism and the Bayesian graded degrees of belief. This is because the literature on expressivism has been mostly dealing with traditional epistemological concepts, as Ridge (2018b) identified, while Egan's problem statement should be understood as one dealing with modalities and beliefs with various amount of certitude. Previous chapter identified three different possibilities for linking these two together, and luckily for quasi-realists, the best options are available for expressivists, contrary to what Smith supposed. This chapter will converge the findings of previous chapters in order to propose a solution to the problem Egan posed for quasi-realists. This first section will explore what the previous discussions affect how stability and doubt should be understood, and the section after this one will then propose a solution to Egan's challenge.

As explained in chapter 4, Egan accused quasi-realists of smugness by saying that they were committed to first-person immunity:

FIRST-PERSON IMMUNITY: I have an *a priori* guarantee against fundamental moral error (Egan 2007, 214).

First-person immunity arose because quasi-realists defined doubt as:

QUASI-REALIST UNCERTAINTY: Being uncertain of one's own moral belief is to be open to a possibility that the belief might not survive an improvement in one's epistemic situation.

This formulation of uncertainty cannot target a stable belief, where stability is defined as one that the believer would not abandon even after an improvement in their moral sensibility, where the improvement is one that the believer would endorse (Egan 2007, 212). Egan's formulation of the problem was shown by Simon Blackburn (2009) to be problematic, as Egan seemed to say that quasi-realists would need to equate stability judgements with truth. Quasi-realists and expressivists are not in the business of providing definitions of truth or falsehood, so this charge does not hold. However, Sebastian Köhler later on modified Egan's argument and challenged expressivists to show how this belief can be doubted, if doubting own moral beliefs is to be open to a possibility that those beliefs can be changed (Köhler 2015, 163).

Not being able to answer Köhler would, in effect, end quasi-realists in the same conclusion Egan came to. While I do not equate stability with truth, if I cannot sensibly doubt stable beliefs, I must claim those beliefs to be true. In section 3.3 it was shown how Michael Ridge (2015) eventually connected stability to credences. His idea was that in its extreme form stability would need to be connected to credences: judging a belief stable would require giving it significantly higher credence than its negation, and no improvements that the believer's epistemic standards would allow could overturn this state of affairs (Ridge 2015, 17). As we saw in section 3.3, this formulation of the stability did not allow Ridge to dodge the bullet, and he was still forced to acknowledge that an expressivist could not doubt the belief they judged stable.

When considering how Michael Smith labelled the three features of moral judgements and comparing those to the stability as discussed by Egan and others, something interesting emerges. Smith (2002, 308) defined robustness of a belief as the stability of that belief's credences, whereas Egan (2007, 212) defined fundamental belief as a stable belief which could not be overturned, no matter what changes in our knowledge or understanding of the issue.[5] It is clear that Egan's formulation of a stable belief must be one that is fully robust in Smith's terms. After all, robustness means resistance to change the certitude. But it is not clear what credences a stable belief should have. Either a stable belief is fully robust and its certitude can be less than 1, or the belief is fully robust and has *full certitude*. The level of certainty in a stable belief is not clear, only that it cannot be changed. Michael Ridge argued for the former, and I will argue for the latter. This argument will lay groundwork for discussion in the next section.

Ridge argued that for the credibility of his solution, he must allow for credence to be less than 1, i.e. he must allow fundamental stable beliefs to be less than absolutely certain (Ridge 2015, 13). The argument is that otherwise radical epistemological scepticism, like the one that the Matrix-movies introduced to the general public at the beginning of this millennia, would only allow beliefs about logical truths and mathematical equations to be fundamental. Ridge also explains Egan's challenge in modal terms and explains a stable judgement as one expressed by "must" (Ridge 2015, 6). Ridge notes that ordinary speakers use "must be true" about some propositions even if they are not willing to give those propositions the same level of certainty as logical and mathematical truths (Ridge 2015, 13). An example of that kind of a proposition would be to say "he must be winning this race; he is so much ahead of the competition" about a runner in a marathon. Statement like this can be said without being absolutely certain that the runner is winning the race. Moreover, these "must" statements are really ubiquitous, so Ridge is not willing to say that these speakers are either confused, do not really mean what they say or are speaking loosely (Ridge 2015, 13). Thus he needs to understand "must", and consequently

[5] Köhler's or Ridge's more accurate characterisation of stability does not fundamentally change Egan's original idea. Namely that a stable belief is one that will not change under any improvement. Köhler and Ridge just formulated this in a way that understood this as the content of a different judgement, the judgement that a belief is stable in this way.

fundamental stable beliefs, as ones encroached only in terms of contextually sensitive "much higher credence".

Attentive reader sees echoes of previous discussion here. In section 5.3 there were discussions about how full belief and Bayesian probabilistic content are related, and one of the theories discussed and rejected was the Lockean thesis, which understands "belief" to be a credence above some threshold t. Ridge's explanation looks surprisingly similar: to be counted as a stable belief using "must", it must have a credence above some contextually determined threshold t_2. To understand a belief as requiring contextually determined, but necessary, credence had a lot of unfortunate side-effects. For one allowing "x must be true" to have less than full credence creates opportunities to deny that we are ever wrong (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 275). If I shout out loud that "x must be true!", dismiss anyone saying otherwise, and it turns out that x was not, in fact, true, I can say that I took no stand. I just assigned x a contextually high enough possibility while also giving its negation a positive possibility; in this way I would not be wrong as such.

The alternative solutions identified in section 5.3 proposed to understand most beliefs as a heuristic commitment to the truth of a proposition (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 286). Moreover, while having the belief commits one to treat a proposition as true, this commitment is defeasible, which means it has less than full credence (Ross & Schoeder 2014, 267). Could we use the same tactic to describe "must be true" as well? No, as that would be to be entirely minimalistic about the term "must". If "x must be true" would be the same thing as committing to treating x as true, there would be nothing to separate "x must be true" and "x". To be clear, in many cases we do seem to act like this is the case, but it is problematic in the specific case Egan set up. Egan's argument calls for fundamental and stable beliefs, which cannot be changed by the believer by any positive change which the believer would endorse. Fundamental and stable beliefs cannot be merely pragmatic commitments to truth and so be defeasible in a suitable situation, as Ross and Schroeder explain their pragmatic commitment to be.

What the reasoning disposition account explains is how we can act according to beliefs we do not regard as certain. We act as those beliefs are true, until a high cost might be the

result of the action (Ross & Schroeder 2014, 267). High stakes make us question our beliefs and act more cautiously. Saying "that runner must be winning the game" can be an expression of a disposition to treat "runner x will win the game" as true as long as there is no high cost associated with that belief. The "must" would be abandoned if a bet for all future net income would be required to utter it. What this shows is that in many cases we say "must be true", but actually mean "must be likely". As already argued, this does not seem to be good enough to capture a belief that the believer judges to be so robust that no positive change would make her drop that belief.

Similar story can be told with the terminology introduced by Sarah Moss. Moss, as we recall from section 5.3, ditched credences as separate states of mind and instead argued that they are part of the content of a belief. Having a 0.2 credence on "it is going to rain tomorrow" is actually believing "it is 0.2 probable that it is going to rain tomorrow". Moss also argued that we use sentences in both strict and loose sense. Saying that "it is three o'clock" might mean any time close enough to three o'clock when the content is "loose", whereas if the content is "strict" it would mean exactly three o'clock (Moss 2018, 60). If credences are part of the content of the belief, then the same terminology can be used to explain how belief and certainty differ from each other. We might have a belief with loose probabilistic content where we communicate, for practical reasons, something which seems true without having 100% confidence in it. We are, in effect, speaking loosely about possibilities and certainties. Speaking loosely about "certainty" and "must" is equal to Ross and Schroeder's disposition to treat a proposition as true. To contrast this, to have full certainty on something is to have a belief with strict probabilistic content, where we are actually certain of something (Moss 2018, 60).

What does this all amount to, and why does it matter? The previous discussion point into a direction where a fundamental and stable belief truly has full credence, no matter if it is understood as a separate state of mind or content as a set of probability spaces. To have full certainty that "x is true" is also to judge that our belief is fully robust. Why is this so? Moss's probabilistic content illustrates this best. If a full certainty on a belief means having as a content a set of probability spaces where no matter what, the proposition is always true, an agent cannot believe that she would change her belief in the future. If she

would believe that, there would exist a possible world in her set of probability spaces where the proposition is not true. To be clear, what we are dealing with here is *subjective confidence* of the truth of a proposition, not facts as such. So even if the agent judges her belief true and judges it fully robust, she could in fact be wrong and somehow learn the truth the very next minute and thus change her mind. For the argument in question, it does not matter. What we are interested in is that at that moment, she believes that she would not change her mind in any possible positive case.

To recap, full robustness and full certitude go hand-in-hand. Believing that you have a fully robust belief has to include a belief about it having a full certitude as well. Otherwise, the possibility of changing it in the future is not ruled out. Also, to have a full certitude on a belief means having a belief about its full robustness. Leaving the option open to change the belief in future is not to have full certainty on its truth. The two beliefs necessarily accompany each other, giving a hint of how to answer Köhler's formulation of Egan's challenge. In the next section, both Köhler and Egan are answered by explaining why our stable beliefs cannot be doubted by anyone. As explained in chapter 3, expressivists have previously argued that doubting our stable beliefs is either impossible, or that failure to do so is not smug. What those explanations have lacked is, however, a clear reason of why this is so. Clearly a judgement of stability is not the same as a judgement of truthiness, and that should make doubting possible. As for the statement that no smugness is involved in this failure of doubting our own stable judgements or beliefs, that has been argued to be either lacking or questionably seen to belong to metaethical commitments, not to ordinary moral thought. The next section will argue that it is indeed impossible to doubt beliefs we have judged stable, and that this failure is indeed smug. However, this smugness is not only a feature of expressivism, but of all human thought regardless of any metaethical inclinations.

6.2 Why Stable Beliefs Cannot Be Doubted by Anyone

In section 3.2, Andy Egan's argument about smug quasi-realists found its clarified form. Instead of needing to define how true or false should be understood, the real challenge for quasi-realists is to explain the states-of-mind involved when an agent doubts her own belief, which she is also judging to be stable. The question is not about what makes claims

stable, fundamental, or error-free, but what happens in the agent's mind when she makes these stability judgements. As Köhler (2015) described the case, when doubting a moral belief J, the agent is judging that the moral sensibility which produced J might be at fault. From the agent's perspective, that would be a complex state-of-mind featuring two judgements:

> (1) A judgement that any sensibility S(x) is better than any other sensibility S(y), if S(x) has certain features F(1), F(2),...., or F(x) which S(y) lacks.
>
> (2) A judgment that there might be (at least) one feature F(x), which is such that my sensibility S(z) lacks it and such that, if my sensibility changed so that it had F(x), I would abandon belief J.

This formulation does not include any reference to credences, but as was argued earlier, credences are essential for defining certainty and uncertainty. Adding credences to judgement (2) would make it:

> (2b) A judgement with positive credence that there exists (at least) one feature F(x), which is such that my sensibility S(z) lacks it and such that, if my sensibility changed so that it had F(x), I would abandon belief J.

Doubting can be elaborated even more clearly when we add a claim about robustness in the judgement, as previous section argued should be done:

> (2c) A judgement with positive credence that belief J is not fully robust, as there exists (at least) one feature F(x), which is such that my sensibility S(z) lacks it and such that, if my sensibility changed so that it had F(x), I would abandon belief J.

Now we can see that we end up with the same result that Köhler ended up in section 3.2. The enhanced formulation will only make it clearer that (2c) cannot co-exists with a judgment that belief J is fully robust. But contrary to Köhler's original formulation, adding robustness and credences in the mix makes it possible to see why this is so.

As explored in chapter 5, credences or degrees of belief are not betting behaviour, but in some circumstances, a credence determines what bets would be acceptable. To understand what credences are and how they should be understood, chapter 5 investigated the relationship between the graded degree of belief and the traditional epistemological binary understanding of beliefs. To understand what Egan's fundamental stable beliefs are, it is crucial to establish the relationship between belief and full credence. Especially as just saying that belief should be understood as equivalent to full credence would require significant changes to our normal understanding of what a belief is. We do seem to have less than fully certain beliefs.

There were two possible options described to mitigate this worry. Either credences and beliefs are separate state of minds, where something to be counted as a belief needs just the practical commitment of treating it as true in our reasoning, as argued by Ross and Schroeder (2014), or as Moss (2018) argued, that a credence is actually part of the content of a belief and is represented by a set of possibility spaces. Both options leave it open for a full credence to be something really rare: a full commitment to the truth of the proposition in question. In other words, having full credence on the truth of a proposition is to claim that we know it, thus claiming to have knowledge. The judgement of knowledge is markedly different from the judgement of stability. For one, to claim knowledge is a judgement about the objective world, while judgements of stability are about the subjective mind.

As argued in the last section, fundamental and stable belief should be understood as a belief with a full credence. Judging our belief stable necessarily means that we believe that we have knowledge: we (think we) know that the belief is true. It does not mean that a claim about stability is a claim about knowledge, these are two different things. Instead, the two are necessarily linked. To claim that you know something to be true is to claim that that belief is stable, and to judge that your belief is stable is to believe that you know that it is a true claim. Claiming knowledge and stability judgement necessarily correlate but do not necessarily cause each other. As we all know, correlation is not causation.

It is quite easy to see why this would be so. The sensibility which produces beliefs is the same we use for evaluating epistemic qualities. The epistemic perspective that forms the

basis of evaluating truthfulness, and either allows or denies forming of hypothesis, both produces credences for beliefs and evaluates if they are true. To be clear, this does not mean that anyone should claim knowledge *because* their belief is stable. It just is that these two things necessarily correlate as the same epistemic sensibility produce both of them based on same known facts.

Doubting things which you declare as knowledge does not seem to be coherent. "I know that x, but it might not be x" does not look too good of a judgement. While there still exists the same asymmetry that Egan noticed between our beliefs and everyone else's beliefs, suddenly it does not look problematic. If we know that "killing people just for own pleasure is wrong" we will say that anyone who does not agree is wrong. That might be smug, but as long as we truly can say that we know that, we simply cannot allow that anyone disagreeing could be right. That is a psychological restriction and it might be that someone can persuade me otherwise, and thus, we can conclude that we did not actually know that. But at the moment of declaring something as a piece of knowledge, we automatically discredit any other options. Is this smug? Maybe, but it rather looks like we cannot help ourselves. Turns out that Andy Egan did find out a real feature of quasi-realism. Quasi-realists cannot doubt their own beliefs they judge as stable. But neither can anyone else. However, quasi-realists can also explain why this is so: states of minds expressed by judging our own belief stable and doubting that same belief are in conflict. Providing an explanation to this phenomena should not be seen as a fault, but as a benefit of expressivism and quasi-realism.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has explored how uncertainty in moral beliefs should be understood from quasi-realist perspective. As there has been arguments against quasi-realism that it, in fact, cannot do this, investigating those has formed the backbone of the thesis. Andy Egan accused quasi-realists for being smug about their fundamental moral beliefs as those could not leave any room for uncertainty in a quasi-realist narrative. Even worse, Michael Smith has accused of expressivists, which quasi-realists are, of not even being capable of accounting for uncertainty in *any* moral belief. In this thesis I have argued that both arguments are wrong, and that quasi-realists do not face any additional burden of proof in these matters.

To understand why Andy Egan's accusation of smugness against quasi-realism misses its mark it is important to understand what needs to be explained. Egan supposed that quasi-realists would be in a unique situation where they would need go against common moral thought and claim to know *a priori* that any of their stable moral beliefs would be true, while no one else's stable moral beliefs would enjoy such assurances. To dissolve this accusation, it needs to be shown either that no such *a priori* knowledge exist, or that this does not go against our surface-level moralizing. Egan's focus on the *a priori* truthfulness turned out to be flawed, but the problem persisted. The problem was actually about the impossibility for an expressivist to entertain ideas of stability and uncertainty about one and the same moral belief. Not being able to doubt a belief based on just the fact that one is not going to change it after any positive change is just as smug as *a priori* certainty that one is correct. To defuse the charge of smugness quasi-realist needs to either reformulate what uncertainty means or explain why we cannot doubt our stable beliefs.

In this thesis I have argued that the latter project should be the aim of quasi-realists. Indeed, the correct route would be to say that we all are smug about *all* of our stable beliefs, and not just moral beliefs. While similar argument has been made by many expressivists, reasons for this has been left somewhat unclear. In this thesis I aimed to explain why smugness arises from judgements of stability by investigating how stability, robustness, and credence are connected. I argued that only beliefs with a full credence could be declared stable, and at the same time, declaring a belief as stable is to claim

knowledge about the issue. A judgement of stability inevitably means a belief of knowledge, as both arise from the same roots. Doubting something you declare you know is not coherent, which explains why no one can coherently think that their belief is stable and that it could be erroneous, at least at the same time.

For the previous argument to work, relying on credences must be available for expressivists. Having credences available requires answering Michael Smith's argument. Chapter 5 of thesis argued that credences are not well explained by anyone, and that the standard description of betting behaviour is especially not suitable for describing moral uncertainty. While Krister Bykvist and Jonas Olson have done commendable job in pointing out all the ways that expressivists have failed in explaining credences, the situation is not much better for anyone else. No one has been able to offer any clear arguments why realists would be in any better position when it comes to explaining what credences are and how they should be understood. Based on the discussion in the section 5.3, of the three possible ways a credence is linked to a belief: either belief is reducible to a credence, belief and a credence co-exist side-by-side, or that a credence is part of the content of belief. Only the first one poses any trouble for expressivists. Luckily for expressivists, the first option also looks like the least probable one. If credences cannot be reduced to beliefs, expressivists should be able to use any explanation of credences that realists can use.

All problems solved? Not quite. There are a lot of open questions still in the air. While the move to claim to use whatever explanation realists will use in order to explain credences is in all probability the correct one, as a solution it is not the most elegant one. We would all benefit from a good explanation of what credences are. Especially as, despite Bykvist and Olson's insistence that we should be able to compare our confidence-level of descriptive and moral beliefs, there does seem to be something different about the two. Comparing "grass is probably green on the next side of this building" and "theft is most definitely wrong" are not necessarily intuitively comparable. This incomparability should not be thought to be a problem just for expressivists. Indeed, expressivists might be in a better position to explain differences between moral and descriptive beliefs like these, as they in any case claim that these are different types of mental states.

There is also a concern about how to modify expressivist and quasi-realist theories to speak of credences. While this thesis has argued that there is no obstacle for including credences to an expressivist theory, no current theory explicitly speaks of certitude, preferring to talk only in the language of binary-belief (Ridge 2018, 21). While focusing just on practical dispositions to count a proposition as true or similar heuristics will give a story about almost all of our moral talk, a significant portion will be left out. Luckily, if the arguments made in this thesis are correct, all the tools for providing the explanation are available to expressivists.

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